DEVELOPING A MINISTRY MODEL FOR BIBLICAL EDUCATION THROUGH SMALL GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Russell Temple CME Church in Alexandria, Virginia. The problem in context is that the members do not understand how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace are essential to discipleship formation. If the members participate in Bible study regarding discipleship formation, then they will learn how certain spiritual concepts nurture their faith formation. The duration of this project was six weeks. Mixed methods were used to collect data utilizing pre- and post- assessments, observations, group discussions, and post interviews. Because the members participated in Bible study, they learned how certain spiritual concepts nurtured their faith formation.

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United Theological Seminary has taught me the value of a synergistic approach to accomplishing an objective. The efficacy of synergy demonstrates that working together with others is a more effective means of solving a problem or accomplishing a goal than attempts by individuals on their own. To that end, I want to acknowledge those who helped me fulfill my dream.

First, I want to thank my heavenly Father, who loves me with an endless and unconditional love, and for choosing me to be a co-laborer in His kingdom. I thank you, Lord, for your prevenient grace, your saving grace, your justifying grace, your sanctifying grace, and the sufficiency of your grace. As a loving Father, you provided everything that I needed and then some. You have been faithful every step of the way and I am grateful. Without you, Lord, I would not have been able to reach this academic attainment. To God be the glory for the things He has done!

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education. To Dr. Lori D. Spears whose editorial skills are absolutely, amazingly awesome! Thank you for editing my thesis.

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With a grateful heart, I want to express my sincere gratitude to the officers and members of Russell Temple CME Church, Alexandria, Virginia, who allowed me to use the church and the membership as the context for my Doctor of Ministry project. Without your endorsement, financial support, and participation, my dream of completing the Doctor of Ministry would not have come into fruition. Your prayers and words of encouragement were a source of strength along this three-year journey. My heart just keeps thanking you and thanking you. May God bless you richly!

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study, and serving as the registrars; Sis. Lillian Harris and Sis. Marie Manning for serving as the observers, gathering pertinent data for the project, and providing feedback to the teachers after each lesson; Sis. Kimberly Carter, Sis. Johnna Hardy, Sis. Louise Hardy, Bro. Jeffrey Johnson, Bro. Odell Sherman, Sis. Veronica Pace, and Sis. Wanda Thurman-Winn for your willingness to create and participate in the dynamic and innovative commercials during the worship service. Your efforts were effective in recruiting participants for the satellite Bible study.

Lastly, I want to thank all my friends and colleagues who provided inspiration, prayers, guidance, and support. The names are too numerous to list. You know who you are. I am grateful and touched beyond words.

DEDICATION

> Families are the compass that guides us. They are the inspiration to reach great heights, and our comfort when we occasionally falter.
>
> —Brad Henry

This thesis is dedicated to my family, the Murphy family. To my parents who fanned a flame for knowledge, made me believe that the sky is the limit to what I can have, and then gave me the love, support, and guidance to fulfill my dreams. To my deceased uncle who believed that I could do anything and provided the inspiration and resources to help me obtain my goals. To my deceased brother who always supported me and told me I was smart. To my strong, sanctified, and sagacious sisters who are my super-sheroes. Lastly, to my nephews and nieces who have always supported my aspirations. The love of a family is like no other. Thank you for being the wind beneath my wings. You are God's gift to me.

Most people in America, when they are exposed to the Christian faith, are not being transformed. They take one step into the door, and the journey ends. They are not being allowed, encouraged, or equipped to love or to think like Christ. Yet in many ways a focus on spiritual formation fits what a new generation is really seeking. Transformation is a process, a journey, not a one-time decision.

—David Kinnanam

INTRODUCTION

One of the most remarkable examples of a sustained teaching ministry in the local church is the small group model found in church school and Bible study classes. However, at Russell Temple CME Church, societal demands and trends have caused a decrease in Bible study attendance. There are those who work or attend college at night, while others must meet the demands of family obligations, such as providing homework assistance or transporting their children to and from sports and other extra-curricular activities. The majority of those who attend Bible study consistently are developing and maturing as disciples of Christ, whereas those who do not attend Bible study are lacking in biblical education which is impacting their spiritual maturity. Therefore, this research project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," supports how small satellite Bible study groups can provide increased opportunities for the members to grow in the knowledge of the Word of God to encourage spiritual maturity and foster discipleship formation. If the members participate in a Bible study regarding discipleship formation, then they will learn how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace nurture their faith formation. Adopting John Wesley's model of class meetings or satellite Bible study groups offers a viable solution. The next segment provides an integration of the investigative study of each of the four foundational chapters, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary which supports the project.

Chapter two, the biblical foundation, focuses on establishing small groups for discipleship formation derives from the New Testament scripture, Acts 2:42-47 which states:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved.[1]

An examination of Acts 2:42-47 upholds the biblical foundation for biblical education through small Bible study groups. Since the home was the main establishment of society, the believers and their families assembled to form house churches which were small groups designed to cultivate and mature the believers' faith. After the Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples formed churches which played an essential role in the growth and nurture of the believers. The small size and intimate setting of house churches fostered a family-like atmosphere which encouraged fellowship, discipleship, and stewardship. The objective of the house meetings or small groups was to develop a communal life in Christ which would promote discipleship formation among the believers.

The historical foundation of Bible study groups for discipleship formation are seen during the Protestant Reformation era (chapter three). Several historic prominent figures such as, John Wesley, Phillip Spener, and the Moravians, helped to restore and propagate the idea and success of home Bible study small groups. Subsequently, like the biblical foundation model of Acts 2:42-47, small Bible study meetings were established

[1] Biblical citations are from the New International Version unless otherwise stated, Acts 2:42-47.

to increase biblical knowledge and facilitate spiritual maturity. Like the churches of the first century, these small Bible study groups developed during the Protestant Reformation era were held in the believers' homes.

Wesleyan theology is carefully chosen as a theological foundation to substantiate the thesis and practice of discipleship development through small Bible study groups (chapter four). The nature of Wesleyan theology focuses on four essential theological concepts: salvation, sin, faith and grace, particularly prevenient grace (the grace that goes before you), justifying grace (the grace that causes one to repent), and sanctifying grace (the grace that allows one to live in harmony with God, self, and community). At the core of Wesleyan theology is the deep grasp and the critical awareness of God's amazing grace. This knowledge and experience of God's grace helps to facilitate the faith formation or transformation in the life of the believer. John Wesley fervently believed that his small Bible study groups exemplified the biblical prototype found in Acts 2:42-47 as well as those small groups re-established by historic figures Horneck, Spener and the Moravians. The new converts met in their homes or wherever convenient to study God's Word, which resulted in a biblical education model through small groups.

Lastly, through careful study and research, the field of education is selected as the interdisciplinary foundation. The scriptures insist that the church instructs its people for spiritual growth. Moses records, "Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave" (Ex. 18:20). Additionally, Paul writes in his epistle to the Romans, "But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed" (Rom. 6:17). Hence, teaching is central to the Lord's plan. He gives this

command to his disciples before His ascension, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20). The first century church executed this command using Acts 2:42 as a biblical and interdisciplinary foundation. Luke records, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). As a result of their teaching and relationships, both with God and each other, the believers were being transformed into disciples of Christ.

An exploration of the interdisciplinary science of education (chapter five) began with researching the cognitive learning theory. In short, cognitive learning methods teach people how to learn by imparting and encouraging critical thinking through associations and making connections. The teacher served as a facilitator by guiding the students into discovery while asking probing questions, helping the students to make connections with prior knowledge to new concepts, and encouraging the students to reflect on personal experiences. In summary, these four perspectives, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary, provide the foundation to support the Doctor of Ministry project, “Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups.”

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

This initial chapter seeks to address the ways in which my ministry interests and skills relate to the needs of Russell Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church and how the connection can form the foundation for a doctoral project. Additionally, a theme statement and premise on which to construct my project will be based on how the contextual analysis and personal ministerial development converge. The first section will describe and analyze my life experiences which aided my development as a Christian leader. Furthermore, this section will evaluate my present professional strengths. The second section will present an analysis and identification of the needs, opportunities, and challenges of my context, Russell Temple CME Church.

Ministry Journey

As a life-long learner, I have always enjoyed reading books and attending school. Even as a young child growing up in the 1960s, my educational ideologies were strongly shaped and impacted by the revolution in education which took place in the United States during the 1960s. During the presidencies of both John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, the federal government became progressively education oriented. Both presidents lobbied Congress for increased federal assistance to education which led to the

development of innovative and novel programs.[1] A change in the approach to teaching American history was one of the offshoots of the Civil Rights Movement. Courses exploring the establishment of the United States began stressing multi-cultural education and diversity. Consequently, the struggles of black Americans for parity and uniformity were added to course material.[2]

Thus, while growing up in the sixties, education was the primary building blocks, as well as a passport to ensuring that black Americans had a more promising future than previously. Marian Wright Edelman's quote, "Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it" was the premise and substratum of my parents' rearing.[3] Not only were the children in the household encouraged to study hard, do well in school, and get a good education, but to also make a difference in the world. In addition to positive elements garnered in both the home and school, the church also provided and emphasized a strong spiritual foundation. This village concept of home, church and school operated harmoniously to institute a solid social, spiritual, and academic foundation. Like the message within Marian Wright Edelman's quote, the members of the village believed and stood on the bedrock principle that when education is valued, lives change which leads to communities changing. From this adage, if education were the key to changing lives and communities, then becoming an agent of change was a goal to achieve. With that in mind, I worked hard, pursued my

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[1] "The 1960s Education: Overview," Encyclopedia, https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/culture-magazines/1960s-education-overview.

[2] "The 1960s Education," Encyclopedia, https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/culture-magazines/1960s-education-overview.

[3] Marian Wright Edelman Wright – an advocate for children's rights and founder of the Children's Defense Fund.

passion, and earned three academic degrees: a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland in 1979; a Master of Education degree in Reading Education from Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland in 1991; and a Master of Divinity degree from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia in 2008.

Excitedly, I began my career journey as a schoolteacher in 1980. As a novice, with an insatiable appetite for learning, educational workshops, seminars and conferences were a treasure trove. With a desire to sharpen my skills sets to reach the students regardless of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status or ability level, participating in these workshops and conferences not only augmented my knowledge base but also refined the skills to implement best practices to help students learn at their greatest potential. To this end, new instructional delivery methods, evaluation and assessment styles, and more effective classroom management techniques helped to create relevant, tailored lesson plans which improved classroom instruction. As a versatile teacher, I became equally adept at designing stimulating projects and assignments for talented and gifted students, as well, as developing intervention strategies to promote success in low achievers. Moreover, by deftly assessing throughout the lesson, I was able to adjust my instruction to provide optimal learning conditions which positively facilitated classroom management.

While college and professional development provided the academic building blocks, attending church provided the spiritual building blocks for discipleship formation. Attending Capitol Heights Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church in Capitol Heights, Maryland, from childhood to adulthood, was an excellent training ground for

discipleship formation. The pastors, officers and Christian educators of the church were instrumental in providing a strong Christian foundation. The children, youth and young adults were given many opportunities to participate in the various aspects of ministry. When the Sunday school superintendent asked me to teach the young adult Sunday school class, I readily applied the same educational strategies and techniques used in my elementary classroom setting to the students in the young adult Sunday school class. I was able to take lackluster topics and turn them into relevant, dynamic discussions while infusing and instilling in the young adults an appetite for learning about biblical themes and characters, as well as, what it means to be a growing Christian. Transformative learning was taken place! This teaching style led to a tremendous increase in Sunday school attendance. Moreover, when asked to facilitate workshops in the church, various instructional strategies were used to meet the needs and learning styles of all in attendance regardless of the gender, age or ability; as a result, the workshop objectives were achieved with great success.

In December 1990, God called me into the ministry. Understanding the benefits of professional development as an educator, I naturally applied the same principles when I was called into ministry. When I attended the leadership and pastors' conferences, as well as Christian education workshops and seminars, the training sessions provided awareness and insight to new information, new concepts, and new trends to the many areas of ministry. The Bible says, "A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before great men" (Prov. 18:16 NASB). To this end, after accepting the call to ministry, my professional training both as an educator and minister, combined with my spiritual gift of teaching, made room or opportunities to assist the pastor in several facets of ministry.

After a fruitful and positive two-year period with the young adult Sunday school class, the pastor appointed me as the Superintendent of Sunday school. The same design used for the young adult Sunday school students was effectively implemented in most Sunday school classes. Training classes for Sunday school teachers wrought effective teachers. This led to increased participation and relevant discourse among the Sunday school students. Noticeably, Sunday school attendance increased across all age groups, but particularly among the adults. Most compellingly, as the students engaged in class discussions such as: learning more about God, following God's will, understanding God's purpose for one's life, and trusting God through major crises, spiritual growth and discipleship formation took place.

Then, two years later the pastor appointed me as the director of Christian Education. At each stage of promotion, my teaching and leadership skills were sharpened. With each successful implementation of the various projects and program design, I was able to gain the confidence and support of the officers and members of the congregation. Thus, I was able to plan and present, with the help of the Board of Christian Education, a blueprint for the church's first Leadership Institute. The aim was to provide an annual forum that would help facilitate discipleship and leadership formation. All members of the church were encouraged to participate in the Leadership Institute. Consequently, church ministries and auxiliaries were strengthened from members and officers participating in the various workshops and leadership development classes. These appointments, young adult Sunday School Teacher, Superintendent of Sunday School and Director of Christian Education, afforded me many occasions to

strengthen my knowledge base in the areas of group dynamics, innovative program design and organizational leadership.

In July 1999, my pastoral ministry began at Wesley Chapel CME Church located in Vernon Hill, Virginia followed by the second pastoral appointment in July 2005 at Ebenezer CME Church located in South Boston, Virginia. With each season of pastoral appointments, God provided opportunities to expand my skill sets to include discipleship formation, organizational leadership, public relations, as well as the ability to craft dynamic presentations for small and large groups that yielded positive results. At the heart of every assignment and every appointment was the desire to instill in others an appetite to know, love, serve and obey the Lord.

Context

In August 2016, I was assigned my third and current pastoral appointment at Russell Temple CME Church, located in Alexandria, Virginia. Russell Temple CME Church is a part of the Seventh Episcopal District of the New York-Washington Region in the Washington-Virginia District of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. The church is nestled in a gentrified, predominantly white residential area in the City of Alexandria, Virginia, in the historic African American neighborhood of Parker-Gray. Several research methods and techniques, including but not limited to oral history interviews were conducted with long-time current and former members, as well as primary historical documents such as questionnaires, timelines, photographs, pamphlets, church bulletins, church anniversary souvenir booklets, and official reports to investigate, gather and analyze information about the church's rich history.

The story of Russell Temple CME Church is unique and captivating. It is a story of trials and tribulations, tears and joys, as well as struggles and victories. Throughout the years, the church has been a means of God's grace through which hundreds of God's children have come to know the truth about God as revealed in God's Word. Russell Temple was originally located in a rented one-room building at the corners of North Pitt and Oronoco Streets. Named in honor of the Presiding Prelate Bishop Russell, the first organizational service of Russell Temple Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was held at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 4, 1941. As the church's membership grew, it became apparent that a larger facility was needed. After purchasing the land and constructing a brand-new church, the doors of the new location of Russell Temple Colored Methodist Episcopal Church were opened for its first worship service on May 11, 1952.

In 1954, the denominational name was changed from Colored Methodist Episcopal Church to Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. Through the years, due to the dedicated leadership of various pastors, officers, and members, Russell Temple's membership continued to increase, new boards and auxiliaries were established, and outreach ministries were introduced. The first parsonage was bought and sold, and then on October 25, 1995, a much larger parsonage was purchased. Additionally, the basement was renovated, structural changes were upgraded, and a church van was purchased. Since its inception, seventy-eight years ago, Russell Temple CME Church had a total of twenty-five pastors. Five of the twenty-five pastors served one year or less. There were only two pastors who served at least eight years, one pastor served ten years, and the other served eight years. The average tenure for most was three years.

In August 2016, I was assigned to Russell Temple CME Church as the twenty-fifth and second female pastor in the rich history of Russell Temple's pastoral appointments. During my second year as pastor, an Official Board[4] meeting was called to consider the spiritual health and needs of the church. Both a Spiritual Needs Assessment and a SWOT Analysis[5] were conducted by the members of the Official Board to assess the strength and the major challenges of the church. The membership of the Official Board, which included the Stewards, Stewardesses, Trustees, Church Treasurer, Sunday School Superintendent, and the Presidents and Directors of each ministry team, were actively participating in the work. The Official Board met approximately every other month or so to discuss, examine, and assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats encountered, as well as, to develop a mission and a vision statement.

The members were placed into four diverse groups comprised of males, females, young adults (eighteen to thirty-five), middle-aged adults (thirty-six to fifty), and seniors (fifty plus). Group One worked to develop the church's mission and vision statements. Group Two was assigned to brainstorm and record the strengths and weaknesses on the S.W.O.T. Analysis chart. Group Three collaboratively discussed and recorded the opportunities and threats of the church on the S.W.O.T. Analysis Chart. Group Four was asked to think about and discuss the spiritual needs of the church. As each small group presented their results to the whole body, the other three groups were able to ask questions, not only to gain personal understanding and clarity, but to also encourage the

[4] Official Board – a board consisting of the officers of the church who ensure that the ministry fulfills its mission.

[5] SWOT Analysis – a strategic planning framework used to identify an organization's internal strengths and weaknesses and its external opportunities and threats related to organizational or project planning.

members to share their viewpoints and feelings while thinking and responding critically. By working together in small and whole groups, this synergetic approach measurably increased efficacy. After careful examination and review of the Spiritual Needs Assessment and SWOT Analyses of Russell Temple, the results provided informative information.

Strengths

First, the members are dedicated to attending and participating in the life of the church. They support the church with their tithes, time, and talent. Secondly, Russell Temple is a generational congregation with families consisting of three to four generations. Thirdly, there are several ministry options where the congregants can serve. In addition, the church added GIVELIFY as a giving option, particularly to reach the millennials. Additionally, because of the diversity of the five choirs, the various genres such as: hymns, anthems, spirituals, gospel, and contemporary, are meeting the needs of the different generations. Lastly, the church, boards and ministries are beginning to use and integrate technology, such as teleconferencing and PowerPoint presentations, more frequently.

Weaknesses

The list of six weaknesses is ranked by importance and urgency. First, biblical literacy is a concern. Most members are not attending Sunday school and or Bible Study. The group felt that reading, understanding, and applying the Word of God to the life of the believers are necessities for Christians to grow and mature as disciples of Christ. The members need to understand the basic concepts of sin, salvation, and grace. Secondly,

most of the members no longer live in the neighborhood or the vicinity of the church. As a result, there is not a large turnout when church events are scheduled during the week, including mid-week Bible study. Additionally, the children, who are dependent on their parents for transportation, are not consistently able to attend and participate in the ministries designed for the children such as: Sunday school and choir rehearsal. Unfortunately, while the church van is available to transport members to and from the church, most members do not take advantage of this offer.

Thirdly, most of the congregation is comprised of an aging congregation. Thus, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for the elderly to serve on boards and ministries as effectively as they once did. The data also revealed a fourth weaknesses. Some of the aged are resistant to change. Particularly, many of the older members who are in leadership positions are having difficulty relinquishing their leadership roles to the younger adults. Similarly, when millennials and young adults offer suggestions to the members of the board, the senior members are often reluctant to embrace the recommendations presented by the younger adults. Noticeably, many of the aged are not technologically savvy nor is there much of an admitted desire to become computer literate. When sending out important and urgent church emails and text messages, the church secretary (with the help of others) must call those who do not own cellular telephones and or do not have email addresses.

Furthermore, some of the seniors want to keep a traditional Methodist liturgy, making it more difficult to appeal and attract more millennials. A fifth weakness identified by the SWOT Analysis is the low retention rate of new members joining the church. Approximately thirty-four adults and children joined the church within the last

two years (2016-2018); however, the retention rate of these new members is disappointingly approximately fifty percent. Where are the other fifty percent? What is causing those who joined the church to not return or attend church more regularly?

Lastly, the sixth weakness revealed from the SWOT Analysis is that the church has been served by twenty-five different pastors during its seventy-nine-year history. Unfortunately, the average term for most pastors is only three years. The excessive high turnover rate among the pastors decreases the efficacy among the membership and comes with a high price tag. Unfortunately, the church loses momentum each time a new pastor arrives. It takes a pastor at least two to three years to learn all the names of the members, identity the culture of the church, assess the membership's talents and gifts, and evaluate the church's strengths and weaknesses. Another key point is members become anxious and fearful from not knowing how long the next pastor will stay. As a result, many of the members leave the church looking for a church where there is longevity and sustainability among the congregation and the pastor. This, of course, puts undue stress and pressure on the current members to take up the slack where those former members once served. Similarly, the new pastor is compelled and pressured to demonstrate and develop trust, build relationships, reclaim former members, and fortify and strengthen the current membership, while trying to gain new members. Clearly, this compelling evidence demonstrates how the high turnover among the pastors negatively impact the church.

Opportunities

The data collected by the group showed that there are more young adults joining the church. Secondly, the young adults are bringing new and fresh ideas to the church. Lastly, if the church were to reach capacity, offering additional service times on Sunday morning, such as 8:00 a.m., can be added to accommodate the increase.

Threats

From the SWOT Analysis, there were three challenges that threatened the growth of the church, but they are not considered a top priority at this time. First, the church is landlocked. Since there are residential homes on all three sides of the church, (both sides and the back of the church) there is no room for expansion. Secondly, there is limited street parking. Unfortunately, most of the residents in the neighborhood do not move their cars on Sundays during the hours of worship. Members must walk a few blocks to park their cars on nearby streets. Lastly, there is a restrictive parking order during the weekday. Motorists can only park their cars up to three hours Monday through Friday. This presents a problem for daytime events such as funerals.

Spiritual Needs Assessment

A Spiritual Needs Assessment was also completed by the Official Board. After a thorough review of the Spiritual Needs Assessment of Russell Temple, the following data was identified, ranked by importance, and then presented to the group. First, the members are not knowledgeable of God's Word and truths including themes, spiritual concepts such as sin, salvation and grace, major characters of the Bible as well as understanding

covenants and the connections of the Old and New Testaments. The group felt this was crucial for the members to grow and mature spiritually in their walk with the Lord. Secondly, most of the leaders of the church would benefit from training on how to be an effective leader, as well as, understanding the responsibility of the board in which they serve. For example, what is the responsibility of the Trustees in the church? A third spiritual need is knowing and understanding one's spiritual gift. While most of the officers have attended at least one workshop, many are still not sure of their spiritual gift. It was recommended that the Spiritual Gift workshop be offered every year. The data also revealed a fourth spiritual need. To increase Sunday school attendance and active participation among the students, the Sunday school department should provide training for Sunday school teachers that will yield positive and successful engagement and participation among the students. Lastly, data from the Spiritual Needs Assessment indicated that many of the members are not well versed in the Wesleyan tradition and CME history.

In conclusion, the results from the Needs Assessment and SWOT Analysis unveiled several strengths and opportunities, as well as several challenges and situations. While the members of the Official Board found the lists of weaknesses and threats somewhat dismal, they did not adopt a defeatist or pessimistic attitude. Rather the members of the group embraced the mindset and attitude that solutions were possible and attainable. What are the next steps for the group? How can the review of the needs, which have been examined, help influence the selection of the theme for the Doctor of Ministry Project? This can be accomplished when a synergistic blend of talents and skills work together to deliver solutions to the challenges and needs of the church.

Developing the Synergy

An old saying, "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts," expresses the basic meaning of *synergy*. What is synergy? The American Heritage Dictionary defines synergism as “The action of two or more substances, organs, or organisms to achieve an effect which each is individually incapable.”[6] Thus, synergy results when two or more people work together in ways that allow all members of the group to participate and share ideas and concepts that result in problem solving. This is the advantage of working in a group: the whole group is greater than the sum of its parts.[7]

The Bible is full of scriptures, narratives and illustrations that promote synergistic teams. The author of Ecclesiastes shared, “Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken” (Ecc. 4:11-12 NIV). Moreover, pastors and church leaders can learn from Moses on how to recruit and receive help from various team members. In Exodus the seventeenth chapter, Moses gave authority to Joshua to lead the troops against the Amalekites at Rephidim. When Moses assumed his position as an intercessor, he held his staff to display the majestic omnipotence of God. When his arms became weary, Aaron and Hur helped to steady his hands as a demonstration of the efficacy of synergy[8] This biblical passage demonstrates that working together with others

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[6] Mark Boyer et al., eds., *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd college ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 1233.

[7] Thomas Harris and John C. Sherblom, *Small Group and Team Communication*, 3rd ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2005).

[8] All biblical citations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted, Exodus 17: 8-13.

is a more effective means of solving a problem or accomplishing a goal than attempts by individuals on their own.

Consequently, this next section of the chapter is a four-fold attempt. First, the section will discuss how the contextual analysis and personal ministerial development converge to address the needs of Russell Temple CME Church. Secondly, the section will give a description of the general nature and content of the proposed Doctor of Ministry project. Thirdly, the section will identify the topic that will be explored through the Doctor of Ministry project. Finally, the section will state the desired learning objectives through the Doctor of Ministry Project.

How does my personal interest and skills relate to the needs of Russell Temple CME Church? First, I can offer training classes that will provide effective pedagogical practices to those who want to teach biblical classes such as Bible Study, Sunday school or for those who are already teaching classes. As a trained educator, I can teach how to scaffold and provide instructional strategies to meet the various needs and learning styles of the student, regardless of the gender, age, or ability. Instructional scaffolding is the support given during the lesson which is tailored to the needs of the student with the aim of helping the student obtain the learning objective. Additionally, I can demonstrate how to transmit knowledge in an interesting manner using a variety of instructional strategies, materials, evaluative techniques, as well as technology to accomplish the objectives.

Secondly, I can help the church create a biblical model to increase biblical literacy and an understanding of the essential spiritual concepts, sin, salvation, and grace, which are crucial to discipleship formation. My experiences as a team leader, reading specialist, instructional coach, as well as, a Sunday school superintendent, director of Christian

Education and then later as a pastor, afforded me many opportunities to grow in the areas of Christian education, discipleship formation, group dynamics, and project design. Most persuasively, while serving as a pastor in Halifax County, I was invited to join and become a member of the Halifax County CME Ministerial Alliance. While sharing among each other during the monthly meetings, it was discovered that there was a common thread among the churches. Each of the nine CME churches needed training in the areas of spiritual growth and discipleship formation, as well as church polity. As God would have it, I presented the idea of a Leadership Institute. The focus of the Leadership Institute was to offer workshops on CME polity and discipleship formation both to the laity and the ministers. Using my original blueprint as a foundation, we collaboratively worked as architects to design a Leadership Institute specifically tailored to meet the spiritual needs of the people while embracing the culture of the nine CME churches. The synergetic decision to blend our talents and gifts to remedy the problem resulted in increased efficiency and efficacy. Thus, with these abilities I can assist the church in designing a biblical template to increase biblical literacy and facilitate spiritual growth.

Lastly, I am equipped with knowledge that enables me to see and do ministry beyond the walls of the context in which I am serving. Specifically, while serving at Ebenezer CME Church, the church adopted the "One Church, One School Model" to provide afterschool tutoring to students who lived in the town of South Boston, Virginia. In the same manner, the church, in partnership with Lake Country Area Agency on Aging, opened its doors to provide senior daycare for area residents every Friday. It was through these partnerships and others that I began to understand a greater mandate of the church. The church is placed in a community to serve not only the church's membership,

but also to serve the church's greater community. To conclude, these talents, skill sets, and practices can be utilized to help inform the Doctor of Ministry Project.

In careful review of the contextual analysis, I believe many of the issues can be addressed through discipleship development. One of the most remarkable examples of a sustained teaching ministry in the local church is the small group model found in Church school and Bible Study classes. However, at Russell Temple CME Church, societal demands and trends have caused a decrease in Bible study attendance. There are those who work or attend college at night, while others must meet the demands of family obligations, such as providing homework assistance or transporting their children to and from sports and other extra-curricular activities. Because the members are not attending Bible study on Wednesday nights, the members are lacking in their understanding of how the essential concepts of sin, salvation and grace are essential to their faith formation. If the members participate in Bible study regarding discipleship formation, then they will learn how certain spiritual concepts nurture their faith formation. Adopting a small satellite Bible study groups which can be held on additional days and times offers a viable solution for those who cannot attend Bible study on Wednesday nights. For this project, the term satellite is defined as a setting or virtual learning classroom that is physically at a distance, not housed at the main campus of church. The members can participate in satellite Bible study groups using the Zoom platform.

What are the benefits to forming small, virtual learning Bible study groups? First, the members would have access to participating in Bible study from anywhere. Whether the members are home, at work on their lunch break, out of town, or even on vacation, they can join and participate anywhere. The internet and a digital device such as a laptop,

tablet, cellular phone, or telephone are all that are needed. Secondly, with the option of choosing among more than one satellite Bible study offering, members have the freedom to choose the best time that is convenient. Thirdly, satellite Bible study offers effective time management. The members can save hours (and gas) every week by not having to travel back and forth to church. Another key point is participation is maximized since there is a lesser number of attendees in the small group compared to the church's larger Bible study setting. Consequently, this intimate setting will have more opportunities for people to share, express their ideas, and ask questions. Additionally, the satellite classroom can expand the members' biblical worldview. It opens the door to attract other students who may live in another town, city, state, or country to share various viewpoints, understandings, and problem-solving techniques with the group. Lastly, while increasing biblical literacy and an understanding of spiritual concepts, the members can also sharpen digital literacy skills through online learning. To that end, adopting satellite Bible study small groups offers a viable solution for those who are not able to attend Bible study on Wednesday nights.

Organizing the Small Groups

The members of the church would pre-register to attend one of three Bible study groups listed on the registration form. The Bible study group would consist of six to twelve people. As the satellite Bible study group increases in membership, the teacher would then begin to identify and train someone within the group to become a new group leader and facilitator. When the membership of the satellite Bible study small group grows to approximately twelve, the group would divide into two groups. The newly

trained Bible Study teacher would become the facilitator for one of the groups. Thus, the church membership would multiply through division. Of course, training classes would be offered for the Bible Study teachers to help them become more effective, relevant, and engaging, which will make the discussions more impactful and meaningful. Additionally, a Bible study student book and a teacher's guide would be developed with approval from the Board of Christian Education and Formation. The next segment will present the hypothesis, topic, theme, and learning objectives for the Doctor of Ministry Project.

Hypothesis, Topic, Theme, and Learning Objectives

The dilemma present in context is that the members do not comprehend how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace are crucial to discipleship formation. Consequently, if the members participate in a small Bible study group relating to discipleship formation, then they will learn how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation and grace nurture their faith formation. Thus, the topic that will be explored through the Doctor of Ministry Project is "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The theme throughout this doctoral project is studying and understanding God's Word fosters discipleship formation. This theme is clearly demonstrated Luke in Acts the second chapter:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42-47 KJV).

From this pericope of scripture, the commencement of one's faith was nurtured to maturity by gathering in Christian homes using small group meetings using the apostles' doctrine as the biblical foundation and instruction for faith formation. Therefore, the desired learning objectives for this project is for the members to understand the critical biblical concepts of sin, salvation, and grace for faith foundation.

Conclusion

In summary, the review of skills and competencies acquired from educational and theological education, as well as praxes and personal experiences have enriched my life and have helped me to become a more competent educator and efficacious pastoral leader. From the early development of my childhood, the "village" encouraged me to get a good education and to use this education to help change the lives of the family and the community. Moreover, my spiritual and academic mentors fostered and endorsed this same philosophy – to use the knowledge to help elevate someone else. God continues to place me in contextual settings so I can use these gifts and skills for the betterment of the community, home, church, and school. These abilities, competencies, and experiences can assist in meeting the needs of discipleship formation through the Doctor of Ministry Project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The next chapter will present an exegetic search and explanation of the biblical passage, Acts 2:42-47 which undergirds the Doctor of Ministry project.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The purpose of this biblical foundation chapter is to provide an exegetical analysis of the biblical passage found in Acts 2:42-47, which aligns with the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." This chapter is organized into three sections. Section one offers a general synopsis of the chapter as well as presents the biblical text and theme that the biblical foundation chapter will explore. Through a careful exegetical exploration, investigation, and interpretation of the biblical pericope that supports and aligns with the Doctor of Ministry project, section two will present a detailed, well-researched analysis of the literary, historical, and social contexts of the scripture. Moreover, section two will include an investigative study of key words and a clarification of important syntactical details. Section three serves as a reflective analysis of all parts of this chapter. In addition, the summary will present a précis or overview examining the text, motif, and suppositions of the exegetical investigation, as well as show how the biblical text supports the Doctor of Ministry project including the hypothesis and theme.

Introduction

Throughout the gospels, Jesus challenges His disciples to become and then to make disciples. There are numerous scriptures that support discipleship formation. It is

clearly mandated by Jesus when He professed the Great Commission, “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20). Moreover, we find in Matthew’s gospel, the calling of Peter and Andrew to become disciples of Jesus, “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men”’ (Matt. 4:18-19). Furthermore, John chapter eight stresses the need for applying Jesus’ teaching to facilitate discipleship formation, “To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32). Lastly, we find in First Peter, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Ptr. 2:21).

While the previous scriptures support discipleship formation, they do not explicitly describe how disciples are formed. Consequently, a question comes to mind: How does one foster discipleship formation among the members of the church? The answer is found in Acts 2:42-47. Luke lays out a biblical model for churches to emulate that will facilitate discipleship formation. Within an intimate small group setting, the first century believers met in the homes of the membership where they were nurtured in God’s word and held accountable through the fellowship of the believers.

Comparable to the first century church, the members of Russell Temple need to be nurtured in God's word, particularly in their understanding of how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace are essential to discipleship formation. If the members participate in Bible study regarding discipleship formation, they will learn how certain spiritual concepts cultivate their faith formation. Thus, the topic that will be explored through the Doctor of Ministry project is "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The theme throughout this doctoral project is studying and understanding God's Word fosters discipleship formation.

This theme is clearly demonstrated by Luke in Acts chapter two:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:42-47).

Discipleship does not just happen serendipitously but is a result of intentional and explicit instruction. In this text, Luke gives a depiction of early Christian communal life by describing the care for the new converts, the life and theology of the community, and how it led to the growth of the church. From the very beginning, home churches were essential to the church's growth. Verse forty-six indicates that the early church would gather in private homes. In his book, *How to Lead Small Churches,* Neal McBride conveys that the home played a vital role in the Jewish community.[1] Within this small group structure, believers participated in instruction, fellowship, and prayer. There are

[1] Neal F. McBride, *How to Lead Small Groups* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress Publications, 1990), 18-19.

advantages to meeting in an intimate, small group setting. Bill Donahue and Russ Robinson, the authors of *Building A Life-Changing Small Group Ministry: A Strategic Guide for Leading Group Life in Your Church (Groups that Grow),* submit that small groups enable interpersonal, life-changing communities where believers experience intimacy with God and with each other.[2] Similarly, Bill Search, the author of *Simple Small Groups,* concludes that small groups facilitate "connecting, changing, and cultivating."[3] Thus, the architectural design of the early church provides a ministry model for biblical education through small groups. As a result, the pericope of Acts 2:43-47 sets the stage for the rest of the chapter by providing the biblical foundation for the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The next section, "An Exegetical Research on the Biblical Passage: Acts 2:42-47," will explore, investigate, and interpret the biblical text that supports and aligns with the Doctor of Ministry project.

An Exegetical Research on the Biblical Passage: Acts 2:42-47

Several questions arise in attempting to explore the literary context of Acts 2:42-47. Who wrote the text and when was it written? What is the literary genre, purpose, and theme of this passage of scripture? Moreover, what key words and grammatical details need further clarification to provide a comprehensive understanding of the passage Acts

[2] Bill Donohue and Russ Robinson, *Building A Life-Changing Small Group Ministry: A Strategic Guide for Leading Group Life in Your Church (Groups that Grow)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 2012), 45.

[3] Bill Search, *Simple Small Groups* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 1992.

2:42-47 as it relates to the project theme? This section is dedicated to a thorough exegetical research in response to these questions.

Literary Context: Title, Authorship and Date

Surprisingly, the writer of this book did not title the book, but church writers named it, "The Acts of the Apostles" from the Greek word, *praxis*, a word used to describe the great deeds of famous men. Yet, it must be argued that the Acts of the Apostles, is not an accurate title because the book is not an account of the activities of the Apostles, but rather a description of the early church associated with the work of the two most leading Apostles, Peter and Paul.[4]

Who wrote the Acts of the Apostles? The first verse of Acts, "In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote all that Jesus did and taught . . ." indicates that Acts is part of a two-volume work because the author identifies himself as the same person who wrote "the first book," the Gospel of Luke.[5] In the same manner, in the introductory sentence, the use of the pronoun "I" seems to show that Theophilus knew the writer since he was addressed in both volumes, (Luke 1:3 and Acts 1:1).[6] Although the earliest manuscripts of both volumes did not indicate its author or title, the titles were added in the second century. There is a general agreement that the same author wrote the two-volume work.[7]

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[4] Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1996), 279.

[5] Gail O'Day, "Acts," in *Women's Bible Commentary Expanded Edition with Apocrypha,* ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 394.

[6] Henry H. Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook with the New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 656.

[7] Demetrius K. Williams, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary,* ed. Brian K. Blount (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 213.

Rackham, the author of *The Acts of the Apostle*, wrote, "Certainly Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Irenaeus, all speak of LUCAS or St. Luke as the author, as if there is no doubt open upon the subject. The Muratorian Canon tells us that the acts of all the apostles were written in one book: Luke compiled them for the most excellent Theophilus because they severally took place in his presence."[8]

When was Acts written? Most scholars are not able to pinpoint an exact date; nevertheless, through deductive reasoning a period can be determined using historical factors. It is believed that Acts was probably written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Most assuredly given the magnitude of this event in the life of the church, Luke would have included this in his book. Similarly, Luke would have included in his writing the death of Paul, traditionally dated between 66-68 A.D. In the same manner, Luke did not reference the persecutions of Christians under Emperor Nero in 64 A.D. As a result, the date usually accepted by conservative scholars for the writing of Acts is around 60-62 A.D.[9]

Literary Genre

How is the Book of Acts classified? Nestled between the gospels and the epistles, the Acts of the Apostles is neither gospel nor epistle. While this unique book share characteristics of both types of writings, Acts is the only historical book of the New *Testament* to record the birth and the early days of the church.[10] Luke endeavors to record

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[8] Richard B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1964), xvi.

[9] Stanley D. Toussaint, "Acts," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1973), 351.

[10] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 394.

the spread of the Gospel, after the Lord's ascension and how the Church was formed. On the other hand, Gail O'Day, a commentary writer for *Acts* in the *Women's Bible Commentary,* contends that Acts is not chiefly historical.[11] She asserts that even though the book may include historic facts, it is not an objective account of the early church. When one likens the Paul of Acts to the Paul of his own letters, the obscure relationship of Acts to early Christian history becomes noticeable. Several scriptures confirm O'Day's findings that there is a contrast between Acts' version of events and those of Paul's (cf. Acts 9:3-30 and Gal. 1:13-17, Acts 15 and Gal. 2:1-10).[12] Editors Gavigan, McCarthy, and McGovern of *The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles,* argue that the Acts of the Apostles is not only a historical book, one of mere re-counted events, but is both historical and theological -- reporting events overshadowed by a theological purpose.[13] Yet still, other theologians, such as Walvoord and Zuck, classify Acts as an Apologetic or defense genre, in which the disciples should not be afraid to argue or defend their beliefs and convictions.[14]

Literary Purpose of Acts

Why was the Book of Acts written? The Book of Acts, straddled between the gospels and the letters of Paul, provides the ideal bridge between the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus and that of the apostles as recorded in the letters. Luke states that he

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[11] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 394.

[12] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 394.

[13] James Gavigan, Brian McCarthy, and Thomas McGovern, eds., *The Navarre Bible: Acts of the Apostles* (Dublin, Ireland: Four Courts Press, 1965), 20.

[14] Toussaint, "Acts," 350.

investigated and sought out eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4) with a view to gather and compile a sequential narrative to recount the movement of the church from its beginning in Jerusalem to Rome, a broader world stage.[15] Luke desired to give an account of the thirty years from the birth of the first church to the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. Moreover, Barclay who wrote *Acts of the Apostles* claims that Luke's purpose was to demonstrate that Christianity was a universal religion for all men of every country; the Jews on the other hand disagreed with this belief.[16] Conversely, the Jews thought they were God's chosen people and not people from other nations.[17] Disagreeing with the Jews, Luke writes Acts to prove that that is not so. To substantiate his point, Luke writes about Phillip preaching to the Samarians (Acts 8:5) and about Cornelius being accepted into the Church by Peter, who was a Jew (Acts 10:34-43). Again, Luke provides the compelling evidence of the Christians preaching to the Gentiles at Antioch (Acts 11:19-20); and of the Church in Acts chapter fifteen making decisions to receive the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews. Repeatedly, Luke demonstrates that Christianity was not solely for the Jews but was a religion which knew no bounds.[18]

Literary Elements: Mood, Characters and Theme

Within the literary structure of this historical narrative, Luke uses several literary elements including but not limited to mood, characters, and theme to convey his message. Luke's diction or word choice creates movement. The phrase 'continued steadfastly in

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[15] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 394.

[16] William Barclay, *Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1955), xvi.

[17] Barclay, *Acts of the Apostles*, xvi.

[18] Barclay, *Acts of the Apostles*, xvi.

the apostles' doctrine and fellowship' (verse 42) indicates a steady movement over time. The phrase 'fear came upon every soul' (verse 43) denotes a trajectory of time where the believers went from not experiencing fear or wonderment to a point along the spectrum where they experienced fear or wonderment. Additionally, "breaking bread from house to house" (verse 46b) speaks to traveling or moving from one house to a different house.

Additionally, the mood Luke creates in this pericope expresses feelings of amazement and joy as seen in verse forty-three (a), "And fear came upon every soul" as well as in verse forty-six (c), "with gladness and singleness of heart." Feelings of community or collective welfare are expressed in verse forty-four (a0, "And all that believed were together" and in verse forty-five, "And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need," and again in verse forty-six (b), "breaking bread from house to house."

So, who are the characters in this text? Words and phrases like 'they' (verse 42) 'came upon every soul' (verse 43) 'apostles' (verse 43), 'they' (verse 46a), 'from house to house' (verse 46b), 'eat their meat' (verse 46c), 'all the people' (verse 47a) suggest plurality. A review of the previous verses in chapter two offers some light on the characters. Verse forty-one states, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," followed by verse forty-two, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." These two verses suggest that the group of three thousand became a part of the community of believers found in verses forty-two through forty-seven.[19] Furthermore, an examination of Luke 1:15 reveals that

[19] Toussaint, "Acts," 360.

there were about 120 men and women, who assembled together in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost. These 120 men and women are also included in the community of believers in verses forty-three through forty-seven.

Every writer has a motif that he or she attempts to communicate in writing. So, what was the message that Luke wanted to disclose? The central theme of Acts is spoken by Jesus when he commissions His disciples, "You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In other words, Christians are to evangelize and share the good news about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.[20] This theme of evangelizing continues in Acts 2:42-47. When the community of believers are instructed consistently in the word of God and spend worship and fellowship with one another, discipleship formation and witnessing will occur, resulting in the spread of the gospel.

Literary Structure: Analyzing Key Words and Grammatical Details

Like the Book of Acts, this pericope of scripture, Acts 2:42-47, is also considered a historical genre. This pericope gives a snapshot of how the early church began and grew as a result of teaching, praying, fellowship and witnessing. While evangelism is surely one outcome of the believers' life together (2:47), the main purpose of their communal life is to cultivate Christian community.[21] The next segment will unpack the meaning of key words and syntactical phrases of Acts 2:42-47 and show how this biblical text

[20] Paul Benware, *Survey of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2003), 127.

[21] J. D. G. Dunn, *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary of Twelve Volumes* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1996), 34-35.

undergirds the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups."

Verse Forty-Two: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . ."

The apostles were the main teachers for Christian families of the first century house churches. In the book, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment,* authors John Stambaugh and David Balch discloses that the Jews who were present during Pentecost as well as the apostles who were original disciples of Jesus and disciples of Paul, the apostle brought the message to Roman cities and were responsible for teaching the apostles' doctrine. Whenever the apostles traveled to a new city, they initially make contact at the synagogue (as at 1 Thessalonica, Acts 17:1-2) or among the craftsmen (Acts 18:2-4).[22] They frequently stayed at the residences of the new converts so they could make further contact among their circle of friends, family and co-workers.[23] In addition to the apostles, other men and women who traveled preaching and forming Christian cells were apart of those who taught the apostles' doctrine (Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:5-9; Gal. 1:1, 17,19).[24] The apostles' doctrine consisted of what they learned from Jesus, but also it included the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as seen in the foreshadow of the Old Testament.[25] Even though the Christians experienced hostility, rejection and persecution, the message taught by the apostles attracted new converts and

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[22] John E. Stambaugh and David L. Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment,* ed. Wayne A. Meeks (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 54.

[23] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment,* 55.

[24] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 56.

[25] E. H. Trenchard, "Acts," in *New International Bible Commentary*, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 1275.

held their fervor and excitement. The monotheistic message, the belief in one God, was dramatically different from their contemporaries.[26]

Verse Forty-Two: ". . . and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

The word, fellowship, comes from the Greek word, koinonia. E. H. Trenchard said, "Fellowship (koinonia) indicates an open-hearted sharing in which each believer gave to others what he had received, whether spiritual or material blessings."[27] The small, intimate koinonia groups among the house churches encouraged Christian fellowship and sharing. When Luke speaks of "the breaking of bread," does he mean an ordinary meal or the celebration of the Lord's Supper? Ajith Fernando, in *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts,* suggests that Luke might intended the breaking of bread to be a spiritual discipline, the Lord's Supper.[28] Luke records several occasions where Jesus broke bread (Lk. 9:16; Lk. 22:19; Lk. 24:30 and Lk. 27:35). One of those (Lk. 22:19) was the occasion when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, Luke 27:35 refers to the breaking of bread as an ordinary meal.

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[26] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment,* 56.

[27] Trenchard, *New International Bible Commentary*, 1275.

[28] Ajith Fernando, *The NIV Application Commentary: Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1998), 121.

Verses Forty-Three through Forty-Five: "And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Trenchard records that, "The outward influence of the church was seen in a widespread awe, in the performance of miracles in the addition to the company of those whom God was saving. The great features of inner life of the church were joy in the Lord, the community of goods, fellowship, and meetings in the temple courts (44-46).[29] The fear (phobos) mentioned here is analogous to "the fear of the Lord" which is a response to wonders and signs, a holy awe. It is the kind of deep respect that people feel in the presence of great power such that it was easy to sell possessions and think of the good of all."[30] Due to their egalitarian attitudes towards one of another, the believers lovingly participated in and experienced community ownership of property (v. 44-45).[31]

Verses Forty-Six and Forty-Seven: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved."

According to Wayne A. Meeks, the author of, *In One Body: The Unity of Humankind in Colossians and Ephesians,* the community of Christians conducted church in their private homes which allowed them to discreetly worship without bringing any attention to their true allegiance. Psalms and hymns were sung, and testimonies and instruction were offered to encourage the congregation and bring glory to God (Eph.

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[29] Trenchard, *New International Bible Commentary*, 1275.

[30] Trenchard, *New International Bible Commentary*, 1275.

[31] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 55.

5:18-20; Col. 3:16-17).[32] The believers shared their message through personal involvement as well as letters of introduction and encouragement. New converts were invited to the group's weekly house meeting to hear the apostle's teaching.[33] Likewise, these same methods were utilized to strengthen the believers' faith and dedication.[34] Brueggemann, the author of *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV – Year A*, reminds us that this early church that grew so rapidly "did not devote themselves to evangelism, but to preaching and fellowship, to worship and acts of caring."[35] God honored their faithfulness by adding "to the assembly day by day those who were being saved" (v. 47b).

The Historical Context of the Biblical Passage

Historically speaking, how did the Roman Empire and its political and military background correlate to the historic context, events, and trends in Acts 2:42-47? The Book of Acts describes events from the ascension of Jesus to Paul's arrival in Rome. The first five chapters of Acts paints a portrait of the birth, life and community of the early church.[36] Luke geographically connects Jerusalem, the place where the church started, to Rome, the political citadel of the world. As the historical saga unfolds, Luke shows how

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[32] Wayne A. Meeks, "In One Body: The Unity of Humankind in Colossians and Ephesians," in *The New Testament in Its Social Environment* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1986), 58.

[33] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 55.

[34] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 57.

[35] Walter Brueggemann et al., *Texts for Preaching: A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV—Year A* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 284.

[36] Martin Dibelius, *The Book of Acts: Form, Style, and Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Press, 2004), 3.

the advancement of God's word traveled throughout Palestine, to Antioch, and from there westward, through Asia Minor and Greece, to the center of the Roman Empire - Rome.[37]

Political

The denizens of Rome, as well as the disciples of Jesus were under the rule of the political, military and economic superpower – Rome. According to Davidson, Rome's vast empire, which was regarded as the only civilized world, spanned across Africa, Asia and Europe including most of the Mediterranean territories. Furthermore, any territory outside of the Roman Empire was barbaric and subject "to forces of lawlessness and savagery."[38] Who was responsible for this massive empire? Davidson cites that the entire breadth of this Roman Empire was created and ruled by a single individual, Octavian, the great-nephew of Julius Caesar. Octavian would later become known as Augustus (31 B.C. – A.D. 14).[39] Aymer, the author of "Acts of the Apostles," reports that Luke wrote Acts under the empire's seizure and political control of the Mediterranean Region. This takeover was done using military, economic, and religious methods.[40]

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[37] Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook*, 655.

[38] Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine Ad 30-312*, vol. 1, consulting ed. John D. Woodbridge and David F. Wright (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 19.

[39] Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, 19.

[40] Margaret Aymer, "Acts of the Apostles," in *Commentary Women's Bible Commentary,* rev. and updated ed., ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 537.

Military

The military might of the entire Rome Empire was quite massive consisting of approximately 100,000 legionaries. These highly trained voluntary soldiers were held in reserve to fight at any one time.[41] Aymer asserts that the Roman military was notorious for their cruelty. Above all, they had no qualms about making examples of those who instigated a revolt against the Roman Empire (Luke 23:37). Given that Acts was written less than twenty years after the Roman blockage and destruction of Jerusalem, the early church would have been privy to this.[42] This formidable military force, including the retired soldiers, were essential to the empire's infrastructure; they alone were responsible for the *pax Romana*, the Roman peace, which brought stability to the Roman Empire.[43]

The Social Context of the Biblical Passage: Language

With all the massiveness of the Roman Empire, and a world comprised of Africans, Asians, Europeans, Arabians, and Celts, how do you unify such a diverse kingdom? It was language, one of the most unifying forces, that made it possible to interconnect from one side of the territory to the other. The two official tongues of the Roman government, law, and commerce were Latin and Greek. Latin was spoken in the western part of the Roman Empire while Greek was spoken in the eastern part.[44]

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[41] Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, 21.

[42] Aymer, "Acts of the Apostles," 537.

[43] Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, 21.

[44] Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, 21.

Religion

In the Greek-Roman culture, religion was part of the civil order because it was closely interlinked with civilization. It was a world full of gods. Cities had their own patron god(s) which ensured prosperity and security. The god(s) symbolized the city and its antiquity. Worshipping these deities was seen more as patriotic, a civic religion, as opposed to a spiritual religion.[45] Typically, this civic religion did not present any problems to the Greek-Roman Empire.[46] Moreover, in a religious environment where people could worship multiple gods, it was not difficult to expand patriotism to encompass worshipping the emperor.[47]

In the Roman Empire, the emperor was seen and revered as "lord and god," or "lord and savior." At the time of Luke's writing, Caesar, who was the lord of his people, served as the emperor of the entire Roman Empire. Moreover, as he freed people from the tyranny of their local kings, he was also seen as "sotor" or savior of the people. While those who were brought under the subjection of Caesar were permitted to practice their own religion, they were required to acknowledge the preeminence of the Caesar and the Roman gods. It was one's patriotic duty to worship the emperor.[48]

Although most Jews and Christians living in Rome during the first century were upright, the faithful Jews and Christians refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Roman religion. From the Roman viewpoint, the religious assertion that Jesus was a god was acceptable if the Jews and Christians did not preempt the claims of the emperor.

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[45] Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook,* 652-3.

[46] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 45.

[47] Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook*, 653.

[48] Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook*, 652-653.

However, the dilemma for the devoted Jews and Christians was the exclusive claim that only Christ was Lord and Savior. Their refusal to support the preeminence of Caesar was not a religious problem but one of patriotism. In theory, this belief had the capability to destabilize the strength of the empire.[49]

Now, in many respects, most Jews and Christians in the first century were respectable subjects of Rome, but faithful Jews and Christians refused to acknowledge the primacy of Roman religion. The Roman Empire designated the Jewish faith as a "religio licita" or legal religion, and it tolerated the Christian faith as much as possible even though it still repressed both groups. Ivor J. Davidson in his book, *The Birth of the Church* states, "A sacrifice in the temple "for Caesar and the Roman nation" was viewed as an acceptable expression of political loyalty; Jews were exempted from appearing before a magistrate on the Sabbath or on a holy day; and the copper coins that were minted in the country carried no image of the emperor or of pagan deities, in deference to Jewish opposition to graven images."[50]

The Synagogue

The Greek term synagogue which means assemblage refers to a community of people. The architecture design of the synagogue or place of prayer was contingent upon the size and resources of the community. A small synagogue was comprised of a modest room with benches. One could enter from the courtyard through three doors. Conversely, more affluent communities were able to construct a more imposing synagogue or place of

[49] Halley, *Henry H. Halley's Bible Handbook*, 653.

[50] Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, 40.

prayer.[51] The synagogue served as a multi-purpose building: a place of prayer, a community center, and a school for studying the Torah. The artisans, such as the goldsmiths, silversmiths, blacksmiths, carpetmakers and weavers, sat together among the columns of the synagogue. This design allowed the traveling craftsmen to maintain connections with other Jews when traveling to a new city.[52] The synagogue offered a setting where the community of Jews were strengthened by a sense of special separateness.[53]

Socialism

In Acts 2:43-47 and 4:32-37, Luke provides short précises pertaining to the early church community: "all who believed were together and had all things in common" (2:44); and "there was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold . . . [and] laid it at the apostles' feet" (4:34-35). Interestingly, the motif of the passage is money; but as you take a closer look this theme particularly addresses the problem of impoverishment.[54] Williams acknowledges that some have suggested that the early church practiced a basic form of socialism.[55]

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[51] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 48-49.

[52] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 49.

[53] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 49-50.

[54] Justo I. Gonzalez, *Acts: The Gospel of the Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 1-2.

[55] Demetrius K. Williams, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian K. Blount (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 221.

By the start of the Christian era, Jews were residing throughout the Roman territory and beyond its eastern boundaries. Representing every social stratum, Jews were craftsmen, merchants, shippers, moneylenders, and landowners as well as peasants and agricultural workers. Some served in the armies of the Greek-Roman kings. According to the papyri, the biblical and classical documents from Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, Jews also served as government officials, policemen, magistrates, clerks, tax collectors, and granary clerks.[56] Most of the wealth was dominated by two percent of the populace. On the other hand, more than half of the populace lived at a subsistence level at least some of the time.[57]

Women

What about the women? Several of Luke's narratives in the Book of Acts provide glimpses into the social world of women. After Jesus' ascension, a group of men and women assembled in an upper room in Jerusalem to pray (1:13-14). The review of the text discloses that all the men were identified by name. Dissimilarly, of all the women who gathered, only one person is identified by name, "Mary, the mother of Jesus" (1:14). The context of the upper room indicates that women were among those present; however, O'Day's research reveals that the suppression of the names of the remaining women signifies that women do not have equal standing with men in this meeting.[58] A striking illustration are the scattered references in Acts where Luke identifies the women by name

[56] Stambaugh and Balch, *The New Testament in Its Social Environment*, 47.

[57] Aymer, "Acts of the Apostles," 537.

[58] O'Day, "Acts," 396.

or title: the Ethiopian queen Candance (8:27) to the Raising of Tabitha (9:36-43) to the servant Rhoda (12:12) to Priscilla and Aquilla (18:1-4, 18-28).[59]

Women were treated as second-class in the Roman culture. O'Day records, "Luke's desire to represent a picture of Christianity that would win favor with the Roman Empire led to a diminishment role of women's roles in Acts. Consequently, Luke portrays his view of women in the Book of Acts to conform to this Roman standard."[60] This patriarchal social system affected all women, even political iconography, because women were believed to be substandard to men in all things.[61] The most positive depictions of women in Acts are of affluent women and women who were taught by apostles and disciples. The generosity of these wealthy women, particularly widows, was necessary to sustain the church. Even Priscilla and Aquila had the economic resources to sponsor a house-church. These rich women were of critical importance to the early success of Christianity.[62] In conclusion, this section elaborated on the political, social, cultural, and religious diversity of the social context of Acts 2:42-47. The last segment will show how the biblical text supports the Doctor of Ministry project.

Bible Passage and Doctor of Ministry Project

How does the Bible passage relate to or inform the Doctor of Ministry project? Acts 2:42-47 presents a remarkable depiction of the early church; a window into the daily lives of Jesus' first followers and how the apostles laid the foundation of the new

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[59] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 398-400.

[60] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 395.

[61] Aymer, "Acts of the Apostles," 537.

[62] O'Day, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 401.

Christian church. Acts 2:42-47 indicates that the members of the early church assembled in the believers' home to study the word, support each other in prayer, and to grow in their faith. This small group structure facilitated building interpersonal, life-changing communities. W.H. Griffith Thomas, co-founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, endorses the same viewpoint, "For two or three centuries, Christians met in private houses . . . There seems little doubt that these informal gatherings of small groups of believers had great influence in preserving the simplicity and purity of early Christianity."[63] Similarly, Anglican Priest and Evangelist David Watson states, "For the first two centuries, the church met in small groups in the homes of its members, apart from special gatherings in public lecture halls or marketplaces, where people could come together in much larger numbers. Significantly these two centuries mark the most powerful and vigorous advance of the church, which perhaps has never seen been equaled."[64] Both Watson and Thomas affirm the benefits of small group meetings in the home.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned His disciples to evangelize and make disciples (Matt. 28:18-20.) Jesus' message to His disciples was clear. From one group of twelve disciples, Jesus launched a movement that changed the world. Jesus did not commission His followers to make good members, but to make faithful disciples. To that end, the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," will use the model exemplified in Acts 2:42-47 to facilitate discipleship formation. Like the first century churches, the members of Russell

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[63] W. H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1984), 422-423.

[64] David Watson, *I Believe in the Church* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978), 121.

Temple CME Church will conduct small satellite Bible study groups. Members of the church will be encouraged to participate in a Bible study group that is conducive to their schedule. Each small group will have a maximum of twelve students. Through studying and discussing God's Word, the students will be challenged to grow in faith and encouraged to hold each other accountable in his or her Christian walk.

Like the apostles who taught the word of God to the believers, members of the church who are interested in serving as teachers will attend workshops designed to demonstrate instructional strategies and classroom management techniques to insure optimal learning. Additionally, they will learn how to employ questioning techniques to improve classroom discussion that will promote learning and application. The satellite Bible study lessons will focus on the doctrine of sin, salvation, and grace. Each week students will read, examine, discuss, explore, inquire, and wrestle with Bible narratives that addresses sin, salvation, and grace. Students will be challenged to see themselves in the text and to apply the lessons learned from the Bible study to assist in discipleship formation. The students will take pre and post-test assessments, contribute in group discussions, as well as participate in post interview questions to measure spiritual growth over the six-week period. In summary, using the small group model found in Acts 2:42-47 will help facilitate spiritual growth. The very layout of small groups provides an environment of support and nurture for participants to learn, share, challenge each other and grow in their spiritual formation as they experience deep, sincere, genuine faith with others. The next chapter will provide a historical foundation of the creation and development of small discipleship groups during the Protestant Reformation Era and how these models support the Doctor of Ministry project.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this historical foundation chapter is to explore, examine and describe the formation and practice of small groups during the Protestant Reformation era and to show how this work provides support of the Doctor of Ministry topic, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The first section consists of an introduction that describes the topic and gives an overview. The second section, the main body, will serve as the historical foundation of the Doctor of Ministry project. The final section summarizes this chapter and describes how the study of the historical topic is foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project.

The interest on this subject is nothing new. The early church laid the foundation for discipleship formation through the small group model: teaching, fellowship, community welfare, worship, and evangelism. Luke speaks to this model in Acts the second chapter where he writes:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:42-47).

From this scripture, small group meetings cultivated one's faith from its beginning to maturity. Author David Hunsicker writes in his article, "John Wesley: Father of Today's Small Group Concept," that the apostolic teaching was presented in a small group setting at the homes of the believers known as home churches.[1] Moreover, in the article, "Where Did Small Groups Start?" Elesha Coffman explains that in searching the New Testament, especially the letters written by Paul, the word "ekklesia," refers to a gathering of people of God.[2] Coffman further expounds that the gathering of approximately thirty people, consisting of family members of the same household or guild, met weekly or perhaps monthly for worship, exhortation, and instruction. These groups did not think of themselves as small groups, but rather these gatherings or home churches were the only churches known among the members.[3]

Today, those who attend and enjoy intimate, small Bible study groups, also known as house meetings, home groups, cell groups, covenant discipleship groups, conventicles, colleges of piety, meeting houses or small groups rarely know or remember that it was not always like this for the church. The concept of small groups is not novel, but at the expense of struggle, persecution and oppression as noted throughout the New Testament, persons secured the privilege of assembling and meeting in small groups.[4]

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[1] David Hunsicker, "John Wesley: Father of Today's Small Group Concept," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 193, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[2] Elesha Coffman, "Where Did Small Groups Start?" *Christianity Today*, last modified August 8, 2008, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/where-did-small-groups-start.html.

[3] Coffman, "Where Did Small Groups Start?" https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/2008/august/where-did-small-groups-start.html.

[4] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 193, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

The antiquity of the cell group concept during and since the Protestant Reformation era continues to be an intriguing topic. Thus, this topic raises several important inquiries. How did the small group concept originate? During the Protestant Movement, who were the prominent figures that played a role in the development? How did John Wesley, an Anglican minister who founded Methodism, organize small groups? How did Wesley's small groups promote discipleship formation? In response to these inquiries a thorough examination, investigation and description of the small groups is given during the Protestant Reformation Movement.

Main Body

The aim of this main section is to present a comprehensive historical account and analysis of using small groups to foster discipleship formation during the era of Protestant Reformation and the relevancy of small groups to the Doctor of Ministry topic, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." Several subheadings will provide the outline for this section: 1) Origin of the Small Group Movement, 2) Prominent Historic Figures in the Development of Small Groups, and 3) The Organization and Impact of Wesley's Small Group Formation on Discipleship Formation.

Origin of the Small Group Movement

Where did small groups start? The extraordinary development of the early church in the Book of Acts established the development of small groups to facilitate discipleship, evangelism, and missions. In Acts 1:15, Luke reported that one-hundred and twenty

believers gathered in the Upper Room as Jesus instructed. Just ten days later, in response to Peter's sermon at Pentecost and the descent and impact of the Holy Spirit, 3000 souls believed in Jesus and the same day birthed the idea of house churches (Acts 2:41-47). In the article, "A Theology of Small Groups." Mayfield points out that Luke discloses the number of believers grew in rapid fashion to 5000, not including the women and children (Acts 4:4).[5] According to Acts, "Believers were added to the Lord in increasing numbers" (Acts 5:14). Clearly the biblical foundation scriptures found in Acts the second chapter are a vital factor of such rapid growth: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers…And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house" (Acts 2:42, 46). As the church continued to increase and expand, the language moves from addition to multiplication: "In those days, as the number of the disciples was multiplying" (Acts 6:1). Acts adds that, "the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly" (Acts 6:7).[6] According to Mayfield's article, "A Theology of Small Groups," the house church, a small group numbering between ten and forty persons, became the primary focus of the early church (Acts 16:40, Rom. 16:5, and 1 Cor. 16:19).

The premise of the house church was to foster a shared life in Christ together and to nurture spiritual growth and discipleship formation among the believers. The large gatherings in the temple courts, with the outer courts accommodating several thousand worshippers, offered the opportunity for worship and witness among the masses.

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[5] Bob Mayfield, "A Theology of Small Groups," Bob Mayfield, April 15, 2013, http://www.bobmayfield.com/a-theology-of-small-groups/.

[6] Mayfield, "A Theology of Small Groups," http://www.bobmayfield.com/a-theology-of-small-groups/.

However, most of the believers' activity transpired in small group settings as they gathered "house to house."[7] Above all, using small groups or house churches offered a more effective and genuine community of intimacy to connect the believers to Jesus, God's Word, people in the community, and God's work. Also, meeting in the home was a viable safeguard against persecution for the early Christians.[8] In short, the gathering of small groups in homes offered a close-knit community that encouraged spiritual growth, prayer, and Bible study.

Hunsicker writes that this home church model flourished well over one-hundred years before the introduction of the well-established church model that led to a decrease in the number of home churches.[9] Moreover Hunsicker adds,

> With the apparent demise of the home church concept, an important tool in the propagation of the gospel seemed buried and forgotten until the spirit of the Protestant Reformation resurrected the desire to imitate the apostolic church with all its implications. Thus, once again the meeting of small groups of believers began to spring up outside the confines of the traditional, medieval Catholic church structure.[10]

Beside the early church, it is not easy to determine who revived the small group model. Many tried but were unsuccessful for several reasons. For example, the German reformer Martin Luther contemplated the idea but never pursued it.[11] Luther professed "that such

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[7] Mayfield, "A Theology of Small Groups," http://www.bobmayfield.com/a-theology-of-small-groups/.

[8] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 193, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[9] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 193, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[10] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 193, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[11] John McIntosh, "Proposals for Godliness in the Church," *Reformed Theological Review* 35, no. 53, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

self-styled earnest Christians will start to think of themselves as the one, pure church."[12] Luther advised, "If we allow small groups of Christians to separate from the rest, to read the Word, to baptize, and to receive sacraments, we will have established a new church."[13] In other words, because of the potential divisiveness of small groups, Luther strongly preferred everyone in Germany to worship together in one church. Twenty-one years later, Martin Butzer beseeched the Council of Strasburg for their consent to develop small "fellowships," but the Council denied his appeal.[14] Interestingly, it was not until the seventeenth century before the resurgence of the small groups within the life of the ecclesia.

Anthony Horneck (1641-1697) in Great Britain and Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1765) in Germany engendered this rebirth of small groups.[15] Since the early 1700s, small groups existed in one form or another.[16] The next segment discusses prominent historical figures including Anthony Horneck, Philipp Jakob Spener, August Hermann Francke, Count Nikolaus Ludwig van Zinzendorf, the Moravians, and John Wesley, as well as their contributions in the propagation and further development of small groups.

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[12] Charles E. White, ed., "Concerning Earnest Christians: A Newly Discovered Letter of Martin Luther," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 10, no. 5 (1983): 275.

[13] White, "Concerning Earnest Christians," 275.

[14] Wilhelm Pauck, *The Heritage of the Reformation* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press of Glencoe, Inc., 1961), 121.

[15] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 194, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[16] Tim Stafford, "Finding God in Small Groups: Tom Albin's Doctoral Research Reveals Why the Wesley's System Worked Well," *Christianity Today* 47, no. 8 (August 2003): 42, http://0-research.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001428611&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Anthony Horneck

An Anglican priest by the name of Anthony Horneck was originally a Lutheran minister, developed societies in Britain to promote discipleship formation among his congregants. Although his societies were an outgrowth or extension of the Anglican Church, the societies were, nonetheless, under strict supervision of the Church of England. Josiah Woodward, who was a minister of the Poplar Society in London, disclosed that the objective of the societies was to help believers live a life of piety through introspection and self-examination.[17] He stated in his book, *An Account of the Rise of the Religious Societies in the City of London and their Endeavours for the Reformation of Manners,* "That the sole design of this Society {is} to promote real holiness of heart and soul: It is absolutely necessary that the persons who enter into it do seriously resolve, by the Grace of God, to apply themselves to all means proper to accomplish these blessed ends."[18]

Hunsicker suggests that Horneck's social programs particularly influenced and greatly affected John Wesley. His programs affected Wesley particularly with regard to the care for the poor, care for the widows and orphans, assistance in the relief of debt, caring for and visiting the sick, and setting up over ninety schools to educate poor children in London and its surrounding area.[19] Hunsicker's insight proved correct when years later the small group concept would embody Wesley's theology; thus, laying the groundwork and foundation for the Methodist movement's numerical expansion

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[17] Josiah Woodward, *An Account of the Rise of the Religious Societies in the City of London and their Endeavors for Reformation of Manners* (London, UK: J Downing, 1724). 108.

[18] Woodward, *An Account of the Rise*, 108.

[19] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 195-196, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

throughout England and beyond.[20] The success of these societies further birthed other societies, including the Society of Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) in 1699 and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) in 1701.[21] Concurrently, while Horneck proliferated societies in England, Philipp Jakob Spener, a Lutheran minister, revived small groups called conventicles. Who is Philipp Jakob Spener? What was his role in propagating the use of small groups to facilitate discipleship formation? The next segment is dedicated to this major historical figure, Philipp Jakob Spener, and his contributions in the further development of small groups.

Philipp Jakob Spener

Pietism is a seventeenth century movement for the revival of piety in the Lutheran church. Known as the "father of Pietism," Philipp Jakob Spener was born in the middle of the most devastating conflict that point in European history, the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).[22] Thirty Years War decimated a large portion of the German population, ruined crops, aided in the proliferation of disease and obliterated the German economy from the small to large scale.[23] Christopher Gehrz, the writer of the article, "Philipp Jakob Spener: Protestant Pastor Who Founded Pietism," disclosed that although Spener was drawn to the academic life, the young theologian accepted the call to become a

[20] Daniel Castelo, "Perfecting One Another: Friendship and the Moral Implications of Wesley's Small Groups," *Asbury Journal* 64, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 4.

[21] Richard Heitzenrater, *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1732-35* (unpublished doctoral diss., Raleigh, NC: Duke University, 1972), 526.

[22] K. James Stein, *Phillip Jakob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago, IL: Covenant Press, 1986), 9-11.

[23] Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener*, 9-11.

pastor in the Franciscan Church in Frankfurt, Germany. Spener's flock consisted of people who were still recovering from the socio-economic and religious effects of the Thirty Years War.[24] A book by Shantz offers this assessment of the war: "The Thirty Years' War was a war fought primarily in Central Europe between 1618 and 1648. One of the most destructive conflicts in human history, it resulted in eight million fatalities not only from military engagements but also from violence, famine, and plague."[25]

According to Gehrz, even though Spener enjoyed his work as a pastor, he grew disheartened by the spiritual condition of his flock. In 1670, an attorney by the name of Johann Jakob Schutz proposed that Spener start a small Bible study group. Approximately fifteen to twenty men met with Spener on Sunday and Wednesday evenings to study scripture.[26] Spener called these groups *collegia peitatis* (colleges of piety) or conventicles (meeting houses) that were small prayer and study groups.[27] Like the house churches in Acts 2:42-47, the number of conventicles increased to fifty and then to one hundred. Each conventicle was a diverse group of people composed of rich and poor, women and men, and even non-Lutherans. Similar conventicles began to gather in other cities.[28] Five years later after studying these small Bible study groups or

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[24] Stein, *Philip Jakob Spener*, 9-11.

[25] Christopher Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener: Protestant Pastor Who Founded Pietism," *Christianity Today* 63, no. 3 (April 2019), https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[26] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[27] Peter C. Erb, ed., *Pietist Selected Writings* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1983), 5.

[28] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," Christianity Today, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

conventicles, Spener published his *Pia Desideria* in 1675.[29] After publishing his *Pia Desideria*, Spener implemented his program to restructure the Lutheran Church using small groups.[30] In this watershed work, Spener believed that while sermons were scripturally based, the sermon alone did not provide adequate study of the Word because the sermonic pericope during worship service only covered a small fraction of the Bible. Spener worried that the study of God's Word, particularly in the homes was lacking.

What could be done to help facilitate the study of the Word and increase Bible literacy among the congregation? In his *Pia Desideria*, Spener offered three possible solutions: 1) every household would participate in the daily reading of scripture, 2) time would be provided after worship service to read the books of the Bible to those in attendance, and 3) those who attended the colleges of piety or conventicles would be allowed to ask questions and engage in discussion to help facilitate biblical literacy and to call believers to a life of piety or holiness through the Word of God.[31] In summarizing his methodology for facilitating spiritual transformation, Spener strongly believed that people needed to listen to sermons, coupled with reading, meditating and discussing God's Word.[32] However, because literacy was chief among the affluent and upper class, Spener would need the assistance of his young disciple, August Hermann Francke, to help proliferate biblical literacy among the commoners. Who is August Hermann

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[29] Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*: *The Reformation to the Present Day,* vol. 2 (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1985), 205.

[30] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 196, http://0search.ebscohost.com.librarycatalog.vts.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rfh&AN= ATLA0001011789&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

[31] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," Christianity Today, http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[32] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 205-206.

Francke? How did he increase biblical literacy among the lower-class members of society? The next segment is devoted to this key historic figure, August Hermann Francke, and his contributions.

August Hermann Francke

One of Spener's greatest followers was August Hermann Francke. Francke was instrumental in training ministers and missionaries to facilitate biblical literacy and spiritual growth among the illiterate and commoners. In the book, *The Story of Christianity*, Justo L. Gonzalez asserts that Francke, who was a theology professor at the University of Halle, founded Pietist conventicles or small groups that focused on the connection between Pietism and traditional Lutheran theology.[33] Comparatively, Gehrz, said, "Under the leadership of Spener's leading disciple August Hermann Francke, Pietists would put 'love into practice' with astonishing energy."[34] Spener encouraged Francke to seek to have a living encounter with the Word, and not merely read the Word for historic value and knowledge. This eventually led to Francke's conversion, a new way of thinking, and a new way of life.[35] This transformation led him to understand that Christianity was not just a set of rules and creeds, but rather a way of life. Francke

[33] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 207.

[34] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," Christianity Today, http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/ denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[35] Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 105.

believed that the focus or mission of religious universities should be "transforming the whole person, not just training the mind."[36]

To that end, in an effort to put "love into practice" and to facilitate the transformation of the whole person, the Franckean Institutions in Halle educated children of various social classes, took care of the orphans, printed millions of low-costs Bibles, and cultivated competent biblical scholars, military chaplains, ministers and the first Protestant missionaries.[37] As a result of Francke's labor, skilled ministers and missionaries were trained, millions of Bibles were mass produced and distributed, and thousands of Christians received academic and theological education. Subsequently, these believers embraced the Pietist movement and joined in small circles or colleges of piety to encourage spiritual growth, faith, and Bible study. In summary, because of Spener and Francke's work, Pietism and the methodology of small groups or conventicles gained supporters among the German Reformed church and left its mark on the entire Lutheran tradition.[38]

Zinzendorf and the Moravians

Meanwhile, Pietism also influenced and shaped the life of the young Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, whose godfather was Philipp Jakob Spener. He was born to a wealthy royal couple in Dresden, Germany, but his grandmother, Henrietta Catherina Baroness von Gersdorff later raised him. Both Spener and Francke often

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[36] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," Christianity Today, httpps://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[37] Gehrz, "Philipp Jakob Spener," Christianity Today, https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/denominationalfounders/philipp-jakob-spener.html.

[38] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 207.

visited his grandmother, where she hosted *collegio peitatis* or small Bible Study groups in her home. Influenced by his Pietist upbringing, Zinzendorf attended the University of Halle where he studied under Francke.[39] Despite his Pietist lineage and his training at the University of Halle, Zinzendorf became disenchanted with the Pietists and transferred to the University of Wittenberg (one of the main centers of the Lutheran tenet) and became Lutheran.

After completing his studies, Zinzendorf returned to Dresden, and purchased the Berthelsdorf Estate from his grandmother. In purchasing the land, he hoped to form a Christian community for oppressed religious minorities. In Dresden, Zinzendorf was introduced to a group of Moravians who would alter the direction of his life. Persecution by the Catholic Church forced the Moravians, who were originally known as The Unitas Fratrum (Unity of Brethren), to leave their native Moravia where Zinzendorf offered them sanctuary in a small village on his property.[40] Consequently, the Moravians named the village Herrnhut, which means the Lord's watchful care or the Lord's protection. Eventually, Count Zinzendorf left his home and moved his family to the village of Herrnbut.[41] The community continued to grow numerically and spiritually. By May 1725, there were ninety refugees at Herrnhut including Lutherans, Calvinists, Moravians and other enthusiasts.[42]

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[39] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 208.

[40] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 208.

[41] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 208.

[42] J. Taylor Hamilton and Kenneth J. Hamilton, *History of the Moravian Church*: *The Renewed Unitas Fratum, 1722-1957* (Bethlehem, PA: Interprovincial Board of Christian Education Moravian Church in American, 1967), 29.

Zinzendorf duplicated Spener's model of *collegia peitatis*, which he called covenant discipleship groups. Like the traits of the early church in Acts 2:42-47, the covenant discipleship groups were part of a greater restructuring effort in which Zinzendorf created a community dedicated to prayer, praise, Bible study, and Christian fellowship. The number of refugees at Herrnbut grew significantly to six-hundred people with half of them from Moravia by 1734 due to the success of the covenant discipleship groups.[43] Later, John Wesley, an Anglican minister, would encounter the Moravians and learn of Zinzendorf and the Moravians' covenant discipleship groups. This practice of small groups, coupled with Horneck's prototype of small groups, would spawn the birth of Wesley's societies as well as his class and band system. So, how did Wesley's association with the Moravians contribute to the development of Wesley's class and band system? The next segment will describe how Wesley's association with the Moravians contributed to the development of his class and band system.

The Moravians and John Wesley

In 1735, John Wesley and Charles Wesley, his brother, who were Anglican missionaries, were on a ship destined for the Georgia colony in British, North America. A group of Moravian missionaries from Germany were also on the ship. While traveling, a violent storm arose causing many of the English passengers aboard to scream in horror for fear of drowning at sea. In the face of this ferocious storm, the Moravians (who were not afraid to die) worshipped and praised God throughout the storm. Astounded and moved by the Moravians' response to an almost near-death occurrence, this first

[43] Hollis Read, *The Hand of God in History* (Philadelphia, PA: John E. Potter and Company, 1870), 2.

significant encounter with a small Protestant Movement would later have an enormous influence on John Wesley's ministry and the Methodist movement he started.[44] Two years later after having no success and being disappointed with his work in Georgia, a disheartened John Wesley returned to England. Wrestling with his faith and not knowing what to do, Wesley contacted the Moravians. A Moravian bishop by the name of Peter Boehler invited Wesley to a Moravian society meeting on Aldergate Street in London, England.[45] That night, upon hearing Martin Luther's preface to the Epistles of the Romans, Wesley wrote in his journal,

> On Wednesday, May 24 in the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society on Aldersgate Street, (A Moravian meeting) where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart Strangely Warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and felt an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.[46]

Comparatively, Heather Hahn in her article entitled, "A Little-Known Big Influence of John Wesley," proposed that "Wesley's spiritual awakening was a turning point in his life, and arguably it might not have happened without the Moravians."[47] Subsequently, John and Charles Wesley became quite acquainted with the Moravian Brethren. They visited the Moravian village of Herrnhut where Bishop Peter Boehler was particularly successful in leading John Wesley into the full light of the Gospel. Similarly, it was also

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[44] Heather Hahn, "A Little-Known Big Influence on John Wesley," *United Methodist Newsletter (UMNS)*, May 15, 2015, https://www.umnews.org/en/news/a-little-known-big-influence-on-john-wesley.

[45] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 212.

[46] Jarvis Cortroy, "Moravian Moment #22 - The Influence of the Transformed Life," *The Moravian Church Eastern Western Indies Province*, June 10, 2007, http://moravians.net/journals/about-us/34-moravian-moments/92-moravian-moment-22.

[47] Hahn, "A Little-Known Big Influence on John Wesley," https://www.umnews.org/en/news/a-little-known-big-influence-on-john-wesley.

under Peter Boehler that Charles Wesley had his conversion experience.[48] Though greatly inspired by the Moravian teachings, John Wesley decided not to become a Moravian. Nonetheless, Wesley was grateful for their covenant discipleship group model. This model would spawn the birth of Wesley's small prayer and Bible study groups called classes, and bands.

Although Wesley had no intentions of starting a new denomination, the birth of the Methodist Movement took place in Bristol, England. Like Anthony Horneck, Wesley's followers were organized into societies where they initially met in private homes. As the societies increased numerically, Wesley divided the societies into classes or small groups.[49] In the same matter, like Spener, Zinzendorf and the Moravians, Wesley's small groups also met weekly to read and discuss the Bible, pray, and collect funds to help aid the poor. Clearly, Horneck's religious societies, as well as the German Pietist Movement of Spener, Zinzendorf, and the Moravians who proceeded him influenced John Wesley. In summary, this chapter discussed the prominent historical figures, Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf and the Moravians, who helped to regenerate and further develop small groups. The subsequent segment will give an elaborate overview of Wesley's discipleship formation model using societies, classes, and bands.

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[48] Cortroy, "Moravian Moment #22," http://moravians.net/journals/about-us/34-moravian-moments/92-moravian-moment-22.

[49] Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 213.

The Organization and Impact of John Wesley's Small Groups: Societies, Classes and Bands

Societies, classes, and bands comprised Wesley's groups.[50] Societies were formed as Methodists gathered in a given township or city. Members of the societies received instruction. As members grew and matured in their "walk with the Lord," select societies were formed.[51] On the other hand, for those who had fallen into serious sin, penitent bands were established to help restore and mainstream them back into society.[52] Through observation, Wesley realized that those who attended his outdoor preaching only, were more prone to relapsing. Consequently, in 1742, he decided to organize and divide the 1,100 membership of the Bristol society into smaller groups (or classes) of twelve members. Wesley's main purpose for this smaller group format was to provide a conduit to facilitate discipleship formation. He duplicated this class meeting model in London with the understanding that every member of a society had to be a member of a class.[53]

In his article, "300 Years of Small Groups: The European Church from Luther to Wesley," Bunton reports that class meetings were held in homes, shops, and attics. Class meetings were organized by geographic locations to aid in regular and consistent attendance. Both men and women of different ages as well as various levels of Christian development and backgrounds composed these diverse groups. What was the format of the meeting? Were visitors allowed to attend and were there any restrictions? Bunton

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[50] Castelo, "Perfecting One Another," 4.

[51] Heitzenrater, *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1732-35*, 145.

[52] Heitzenrater, *John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1732-35*, 145.

[53] Peter Bunton, "300 Years of Small Groups – The European Church from Luther to Wesley," *Christian Education Journal (Evangelical Seminary)* 11, no. 1 (2014): 97.

writes, “The structure or format of the class meeting consisted of a hymn, followed by testimonies or a confession of sin. Visitors who attended the class meetings could only attend two non-consecutive meetings. Afterwards, the visitor had to decide to either join or cease from attending the class meetings.”[54]

Notably, there were more conversions in the class meetings than in the preaching class. As a result, Wesley decided the class meetings would serve a dual purpose: discipleship formation and evangelism. Wesley’s insight proved correct; it was through Bible study, testimonies or the confession of one’s sin that the believers matured in piety and faith. The most compelling evidence was the exponential growth of 101,712 in the England Methodist societies by 1798.[55] What in particular caused this explosion in numerical growth? Bunton’s research discloses several points. Foremost, the quick spread of Methodism in its infancy stage was a result of the class meeting system. Secondly, Wesley was very deliberate and specific in placing people into these small groups. His intent was to promote and encourage spiritual formation. Thirdly, the intimate small group setting cultivated and inspired accountability which Wesley realized was bedrock to one’s faith journey and development.[56]

Those who were possibly interested in joining a society were placed initially in a small group called a trial band. This information raises another question. What were trial bands and how were the organized? An examination of Bunton’s research states, “The trial band, for example, distinguished a sincere seeker for God from somebody who was

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[54] Bunton, “300 Years of Small Groups,” 98.

[55] Bunton, “300 Years of Small Groups,” 98.

[56] Bunton, “300 Years of Small Groups,” 98.

just casually curious. Members were on trial to see if you really wanted to know and love God."[57] The weekly trial band meeting, of four to six people, met every week to pray and participate in worship. There was always an element of spiritual accountability. Wesley's designed his system to encourage and assist the people who really wanted more of God through pastoral care and spiritual guidance. Those who missed three meetings within a quarter were dismissed. Those who were faithful for two to three months, were recommended by the band leader to be a member of the United Society and the class meeting.

Like the small group model of his predecessors, Horneck, Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf and the Moravians, Wesley's class meetings met weekly for prayer, Bible study, spiritual direction, and guidance. During the class meetings, questions were answered, spiritual advice was given, as well as praying and singing. Although John Wesley was not the founder of the small group concept, the author David Hunsicker offers that Wesley's exceptional and significant influence, through the development of his Methodist classes and bands, are quite noteworthy and important to today's church structure.[58] The next section will summarize the contents of this historical foundations chapter and describe how the study is foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project.

Conclusion

This final section provides a clear and engaging synopsis demonstrating how the material covered in this chapter relates to and undergirds the Doctor of Ministry Project

[57] Bunton, "300 Years of Small Groups," 98.

[58] Hunsicker, "John Wesley," 193.

"Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." After reading about the success of John Wesley's class meetings, Wesley's model offers a viable solution for Russell Temple, particularly for those who are not able to attend Bible Study on Wednesday nights. Just as John Wesley's members held class meetings in the homes, shops and attics by geographic locations, Russell Temple could form satellite Bible study groups where the members of the church could participate in Bible study in different geographic locations including the home, as well as, at the job, in a hotel room while traveling for business or vacation. This paradigm is also a comparable replica of the model found in Acts chapter two, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship…and breaking of bread, from house to house" (Acts 2:42-47).

Secondly, Wesley's model provided training for the class leaders who were responsible for facilitating the class meetings. Duplicating this feature, the Bible study teachers would receive intensive training before the satellite Bible study group began. In addition, weekly sessions would be provided to give feedback to the teachers immediately following the Bible study. During these sessions, the teachers and observers would also have opportunities to evaluate the lesson, offer suggestions, and share in the planning and preparation of future topics and lessons.

Thirdly, Wesley's model emphasized group accountability. To ensure success with this, the teachers would receive pertinent information for each member: name, telephone numbers, and email addresses. The teachers would be responsible for sending out information to the members to keep them informed of updates and reminders. In addition, the teachers would have the responsibility of contacting and checking on those who were absent.

Additionally, Wesley had a succession plan in place when the group size reached the maximum of twelve. As the members attending the class meetings increased in numbers, the class leaders would begin training someone from the group to become a class leader. Thus, when the group reached its maximum number, the group would split or divide into two groups. The newly trained class leader would become the class leader of the recently formed group. Likewise, using Wesley's plan for succession and sustainability, the church would replicate this feature. As the satellite Bible study group increases in size, the teacher would begin to train an apprentice or assistant teacher who would eventually become a teacher for another satellite Bible study group. Before the apprentice is released to facilitate a new Bible study group, he or she will have several opportunities to plan and co-teach with the teacher. After each session, the teacher will meet with the apprentice to discuss, offer feedback and strategies to enhance instruction. Once the satellite Bible study group reaches the maximum group size, the group will split or divide to form two smaller groups. The apprentice will then become the teacher of the newly formed Bible study group. The newly assigned teacher will continue to receive support and assistance from his or her former teacher and from the quarterly professional development classes.

Lastly, Wesley's model of small groups encourages discipleship formation through biblical literacy. Timothy speaks to this in his second epistle bearing his name, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15 NASB). Therefore, biblical literacy is the ability to correctly read and interpret God's Word with proper tools and study (exegesis and hermeneutics) in order to become familiar with God's characters,

themes and the basic spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace. In Wesley's class meetings, the attendees studied, expounded upon, and discussed the scriptures as well as held each other accountable as they grew in the knowledge and understanding of God's Word. Hence, as the transforming power of the scriptures come alive in God's people through the Holy Spirit, then God's people can grow spiritually and mature as disciples of the Lord. Ed Stetzer, the co-author of *Transformational Groups,* confirms,

> Small groups allow individuals to experience faster and deeper personal transformation through authentic community. With a focus on Bible study and applying God's truth to life, small groups help group members experience real life change. For seekers, small groups provide a safe setting to ask questions in a community of people who also wrestle and struggle. They also provide a safe place for Christians to wrestle with faith issues and apply God's Word.[59]

Therefore, forming small Bible study groups offer a feasible opportunity to nurture faith formation through the foundational understanding of sin, salvation, and grace. Moreover, a small group setting maximizes participation among those in attendance. Since there is a lesser number of attendees compared to a larger Bible study setting, people have more opportunities to contribute to class discussions, ask questions, and express their opinions and thoughts. Besides, in an intimate Bible study setting people tend to speak and engage in discussions more often which facilitates intimacy and deeper friendships. Consequently, members within the group are more likely to share their struggles and concerns once they develop friendships and the group creates safe sanctuary. To that end, satellite Bible study small groups offers an ideal setting for members to minister to one another and to encourage each other in their faith. In using John Wesley's class meetings or a small group model for discipleship formation, this project addresses the same

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[59] Ed Stetzer, "The Epidemic of Bible Illiteracy in Our Churches: How Small Groups Can Change the Statistics, *Christianity Today* (Spring 2015), smallgroups.com/articles/2015/epidemic-of-bible-illiteracy-in-our-churches.html.

problem the prominent historical figures had during the era of Protestant Reformation. If the members join in a small group Bible study regarding discipleship development, then they will learn how the essential concepts of sin, salvation, and grace nurture their faith formation. Thus, the theme throughout this doctoral project is studying and understanding God's Word fosters discipleship formation.

In closing, clearly Horneck, Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf and the Moravians and their implementation of small group Bible study models had a definite impact and influence on Wesley's formation and implementation of his small groups which he called classes and bands. As Wesley executed his plans, he adjusted and changed for the better; always keeping in mind that he wanted his members to not only meet with success, but ultimately to become disciples for Christ, with the expectation of living a life of holiness and faithfulness. Dwight L. Moody, an American evangelist who founded the Moody Church offered this praise, "The Methodist class-meetings are the best institution for training converts the world ever saw."[60] Wesley affirms, through his many years of success and growth, that small groups are advantageous for discipleship formation and evangelism. The next chapter includes the investigative research of Wesleyan theology that will provide additional information to support the Doctor of Ministry Project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups."

[60] Charles L. Goodell, *The Drillmaster of Methodism: Principles and Methods for the Class Leader and Pastor* (New York, NY: Eaton and Mains, 1902), 15.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Every person at some point in life must decide whether to receive Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior. However, salvation is just the initial starting point of a lifelong journey as a disciple or follower of Jesus. Jesus entrusted His church with the responsibility of making disciples. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He commissioned His disciples to, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Mt. 28:19-20). Jesus' message was clear; He encapsulated this Great Commission in two simple words, "make disciples." Although these two words, "make disciples," seem simple enough the journey of becoming a disciple is not a simple process. Rather, the journey of discipleship is a lifelong process of becoming like Christ and helping others to become like Christ. While going through the process of making disciples, it must be done from a place of love and nurture.

In the book, *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic and Practical,* Charles Carter asserts that this complex development of discipleship formation consists of reaching, nurturing, instructing, training, and sending those born of God's

Spirit.[1] Similarly, the Apostle Paul addresses this in his letter to the Ephesians, writing "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4:15 NIV). Carter affirms, "A Christian disciple is the end product of the process initiated by God's Spirit, assisted by the leadership of the church and brought to maturity by the exposure to God's Word."[2] Disciples are continually in the process of evolving. So how does one go about making disciples?

The Bible offers the essential tools and resources for the disciple-making process. Discipleship is embedded throughout the themes, tenets and precepts of the Gospels that are bedrock to spiritual formation, where Jesus calls both the twelve disciples and others to follow Him. Jesus' model includes copious examples and demonstrations throughout the Gospels of how the disciple-making process can take place including in Matthew 9:35, Matthew 11:1, John 8:31-32 and others.[3] According to the Bible, there are plenty of times where Jesus ministered to the multitudes. However, when Jesus began His ministry, Jesus called twelve disciples to be His primary relational and ministry community. He understood the value and necessity for a small assembly. Jesus chose to teach them and pour Himself into relationships with them, thereby creating the first "small group."

Jesus spent most of His time training His followers in private and in smaller group settings. Jesus trained His followers one-on-one (the woman at the well – Jn. 4:1-30), one-on-two (the call of James and John – Mt. 4:21-22), and one-on-three (Peter, James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration – Mt. 17:1). Then, there were times when Jesus

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[1] Charles Carter, ed., "Christian Education," in *A Contemporary Wesleyan Theology: Biblical, Systematic, and Practical,* vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983), 870.

[2] Carter, "Christian Education," 870.

[3] Carter, "Christian Education," 870.

did small group ministry with the twelve disciples.[4] Jesus incorporated the model of small groups to develop men and women into disciples and to demonstrate that discipleship is inherently relational. Therefore, small groups provide a natural setting for this process.

In the same way, the apostles embraced Jesus' prototype to form a community of believers, establish the house churches, and make disciples. The Book of Acts, especially chapter two, provides an excellent picture of the early church and the elements of biblical community, which included both the temple courts and included believers going from house to house. Through a system of house groups, these believers engaged in a life together through teaching, fellowship, communion, liberal giving, and worship (Acts 2:42-47). Moreover, students of church history know that Lutherans, Quakers, Moravian Brethren, as well as Baptists used small groups to promote spiritual formation. Church antiquity consists of rich examples of petite conclave systems, which stressed discipleship and accountability.

Unfortunately, over time the term "discipleship" became practically a trite expression in many churches. To appeal to a larger audience, the church recently made the mistake of watering down the expectations that come with being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Too often a desire to be relevant to a larger audience results in the broader culture transforming the church more than the church fulfilling its calling to be salt and light to the world around it (Mt. 5:13-16). Much has been said recently about the perception that there is a growing gap between the way Christians ought to live and the way they live.

Authors David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyon in their recent book, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Rally Thinks about Christianity…and Why It Matters,* discuss research

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[4] Neil D. Anderson, "Wesleyan-Holiness Theology," Asbury University, Department of Bible and Theology, https://www.asbury.edu/about/spiritual-vitality/faith/wesleyan-holiness-theology/.

that suggests that people outside of the church often see Christians as people who have many "unchristian" attributes. The authors feel that people outside of the church see Christians as hypocritical, only concerned with getting people "saved," homophobic, sheltered, too political, and judgmental.[5] In another book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience,* Ron Sider argues, "scandalous behavior is rapidly destroying American Christianity."[6] Indeed, many people notice that Christians fail to live up to some of the most basic teachings of their own faith. There are two serious questions that require consideration. One question is how well are churches developing disciples? The other asks, is there a contemporary or modern-day blueprint to facilitate discipleship formation?

Perhaps one finds one of the best examples for spiritual maturation in the pietistic Protestant reformer John Wesley. Wesley's use of the small group model appears to outperform any other model. Founded on Jesus' design for discipleship, and true to the model of the early church in Acts 2:42-47, John Wesley developed and adopted a simple, innovative plan for maturing and equipping the saints through the ministry of small groups, which he called class meetings. Wesley said, "The Church changes the world not by making converts but by making disciples."[7] John Wesley's class meetings provide an effective method for discipleship development.

Thus, after reviewing the suppositions of the project's biblical and historical chapters, this theological chapter presents a detailed, well-researched analysis of

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[5] Kevin M. Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2009), 1.

[6] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 1.

[7] "Making Disciples: 6 Keys from the Master," DiscipleBlog.com, September 6, 2012, http://www.discipleblog.com/2012/09/making-disciples-6-keys-from-the-master/.

Wesleyan theology. This chapter also discusses how Wesley's instructional system of small groups (class meetings) can serve as a twenty-first century model for the Doctor of Ministry Project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The hypothesis for this project is if the members take part in a small group Bible study pertaining to discipleship formation, then they will understand how the key concepts of sin, salvation, and grace support their faith formation.

Wesleyan Theology

What is Wesleyan theology? Wesleyan theology, which is a Christian theology, is founded in the teachings and writings of John Wesley who was an ordained minister in the Church of England. Together, John and his brother Charles, led a religious movement that became the Methodist denomination. The connection between grace, faith and holiness, and the doctrine of salvation was John Wesley's primary focus.[8] In the book, *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage,* Kenneth L. Carder expresses in his chapter, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," that the central focus of Wesleyan theology was the idea that God's grace is always at work all throughout God's creation.[9] He further shares that Wesley believed that the grace of God—prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace—formed the "order of salvation." Wesley earnestly desired for the people of God to live a life of holiness. Consequently, to turn the people toward God's justifying and sanctifying grace, Wesley challenged persons with God's judgment.[10]

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[8] Anderson, "Wesleyan-Holiness Theology," https://www.asbury.edu/about/spiritual-vitality/faith/wesleyan-holiness-theology/.

[9] Kenneth L. Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," in *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage,* ed. James C. Logan (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 84.

[10] Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," 84.

Similarly, in the article, "Wesleyan Theology," Craig Adams states that, "Wesleyan Theology emphasizes that salvation is a relationship with God, a process toward loving God completely, and a partnership between God and the individual. The individual, however, always has the responsibility to respond to God's gracious acting."[11] Patterned after the principles of Matthew 22:37, Wesleyan theology emphasized a life of Christian piety: "to love God with all your heart, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself."[12]

John Wesley did not intend to start a new denomination, nor did he set out to be a systematic theologian. Wesley wove his theological beliefs, the experiences from his spiritual journey, coupled with the established methods of the prominent figures such as Anthony Horneck, Philip Jakob Spener, August Hermann Francke, Count Nikolaus Ludwig van Zinzendorf, and the Moravians into a plan that would address the needs of inner-city, working class people.[13] As an Anglican priest within the Church of England, John Wesley tried his best to address the needs of the people by integrating and adjusting his pastoral duties into a workable blend.[14] To reach the people who seldom came to church or participated in the life of the church, Wesley went to where they were in an

[11] Craig L. Adams, "Wesleyan Theology," Commonplace Holiness Blog, craigladams.com/page5/index.html.

[12] Adams, "Wesleyan Theology," Craig Adams, craigladams.com/page5/index.html.

[13] D. Michael Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings: A Model for Making Disciples* (Wilmore, KY: Evangel Publishing House, 1997), 12.

[14] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings*, 12.

attempt to bring them back to the Church. These were they whose lives were negatively affected by the economic and cultural plight at that time.[15]

Out of a heartfelt yearning to nurture personal holiness and a desire to cultivate this holiness throughout the land, John Wesley established a holistic system of training for personal discipleship.[16] Over time, the final amalgamation produced a powerful system with the people called Methodist in eighteenth-century England.[17] From Wesley's theology and experiences, the interconnected structure of societies, classes, and bands emerged. In his paper, "Small Groups and Accountability: The Wesleyan Way of Christian Formation," Steve W. Manskar asserts, "Wesley and the Methodists brought the good news of Christ and universal grace to the people neglected by the established Church."[18] Moreover, like the earlier church paradigm found in Acts 2:42-47, and the prominent historical figures of the Protestant Reformation Era such as Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf, and the Moravians, Wesley organized his followers into small groups, which met for prayer, Bible study and spiritual answerability with an emphasis on ethical accountability.[19] In other words, the Methodist societies and class meetings developed into a spiritual support system. The next segment will identify and describe the six ideologies Wesley adapted from Jesus's teaching.

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[15] Steve W. Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability: The Wesleyan Way of Christian Formation," The General Board of Discipleship, omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[16] Carter, "Christian Education," 868.

[17] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," Omits Word Press, omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[18] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," Omits Word Press, omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[19] Adams, "Wesleyan Theology," craigladams.com/page5/index.html.

Six Principles Adopted from Jesus' Teachings

Wesley and the early Methodists probably came closer to a duplication of Jesus' teaching practices than any other movement in contemporary history. Part of this resemblance may be due to Wesley's steely resolve to recapture both the spirit and the methods of early Christianity.[20] Wesley adapted six ideologies or principles from Jesus' teaching.

Principle One

Wesley took his message to where the people were. Wesley preached in the coal mines, the market squares and even in the open fields, which was a revolutionary change from English custom. The content of Wesley's messages brought sinners to their knees, and perfunctory or lukewarm Christians to a place of wanting to serve God wholeheartedly.[21]

Principle Two

Wesley preached to the crowds, but he provided explicit instruction on righteous living to those who assembled for his class meetings. While in public arenas, Wesley astutely preached evangelistic messages of salvation to the lost. Once the new believers showed a commitment to follow Jesus, Wesley placed them in class meetings or small groups. Wesley judiciously differentiated between his messages of evangelism and the

[20] Carter, "Christian Education," 868.

[21] Carter, "Christian Education," 868.

content of instruction that he delivered through his class meetings. The class meetings allowed the new converts to grow in the structure of an intimate, supportive fellowship.[22]

Principle Three

John Wesley provided training for his interns, the same way Jesus and the Apostle Paul trained their apprentices. Wesley trained and worked collaboratively with his trainees who strove to become future Methodist leaders. He provided instruction and praxis in the areas of evangelizing, teaching new believers through small groups, and alleviating social ills of society. Wesley assessed their work meticulously and held them responsible for the quality of the ministry.[23]

Principle Four

Wesley supported his teaching and preaching with scripture. His messages were both relevant and appropriate for his audiences. John Wesley always used words and phrases that the people could understand. He instructed his apprentices to address behaviors and actions while preaching rather than arguing doctrines.[24]

Principle Five

Early Methodism was birthed as a result of the rampant form of Christianity that abandoned the spirit of discipleship. At the heart of Wesleyan theology was the motif of

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[22] Carter, "Christian Education," 868.

[23] Carter, "Christian Education," 869.

[24] Carter, "Christian Education," 869.

Christian perfection—the life of walking in God's Spirit. This moment was one of Christian instruction, not in a formal academic way, but in terms of learning the things of God's Spirit in organized, intimate small groups.[25]

Principle Six

Methodism was a cross-cultural movement. The focus of the Methodist movement was constantly downward to the neediest and the most desolate of England's populace. This was an intentional endeavor on Wesley's part; he deemed the care for the destitute as the mark of authenticity for any Christian ministry.[26] However, Wesley's revealed his brilliance through the implementation of his small groups that emphasized a life of piety. The members developed and applied reciprocated accountability as the framework for disclosing how they lived out their faith in their daily lives. These small groups developed into Wesley's process for behavioral transformation.[27]

Wesley strongly believed that Christians had a responsibility to help one another develop in their spiritual formation. Like the house churches in Acts 2:42-47 that met in small, intimate house groups, Wesley understood that conversation and participation in community with other believers—not in isolation—best nurtured Christian faith. The love, accountability and support received in the small, intimate group settings empowered women and men to share the gospel of Jesus with others as evidenced by the

[25] Carter, "Christian Education," 869.

[26] Carter, "Christian Education," 869-70.

[27] Adams, "Wesleyan Theology," craigladams.com/page5/index.html.

transformation witnessed in their daily walks.[28] In short, the Wesley designed this Wesleyan Theology of small groups to provide the support needed to develop and encourage people to become disciples of Christ who would eventually share their faith with others.[29] The subsequent section examines the importance of grace for empowering and enabling growth in discipleship formation.

Grace for Empowering and Enabling Growth in Discipleship Formation

What is grace? This interrogatory sentence is vital because grace is critical in the life of a Christian. According to Ephesians, grace plays a major part in salvation: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). Thus, grace is the foundation of salvation. Kevin Watson, in his book *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living,* affirms:

> God's grace reaches down to lift us up. Grace is God's action on our behalf to work to save us when we cannot save ourselves. God is complete and sufficient; apart from God's grace, we are neither complete nor sufficient. Grace is God's love that seeks to restore us when we cannot restore ourselves and when we do not deserve to be restored.[30]

The writer of Second Corinthians supports this, writing "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my

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[28] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[29] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[30] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 15.

weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me" (2 Cor. 12:8-9 NIV). What is grace? When humanity is weak and fragile, through grace God's omnipotence is made perfect.[31]

When John Wesley spoke of grace, it was more than describing theoretical concepts or theological discourse, but rather describing the powerful experiences of grace in his own personal life. For the first thirty-five years of his life, Wesley tried to live on his own power. [32] As he consistently incorporated the spiritual disciplines of scripture reading, prayer and fasting, he recognized that something was still missing. Ultimately, Wesley learned it was faith and the forgiveness coming through Jesus that reconciles humankind with God.[33] The Book of Romans speaks to this:

> Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:20-24 NIV).

Wesley believed that grace penetrated every area of a Christian's life. As disciples of Christ grow closer in their connection with God, they become aware of three major expressions of grace: the need for God by grace, the forgiveness of sins by grace, and the participation in salvation by grace.[34] God's grace comes to someone before becoming Christian. Grace inspires one's new birth and calls for a deeper, intimate relationship with God. One can begin and continue becoming a disciple of Christ only through grace.[35] In

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[31] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 15.

[32] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 16.

[33] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 20.

[34] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 20.

[35] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 33.

other words, Wesley saw God's grace punctuating the whole of human life within an expansive understanding of biblical salvation. In Wesley's sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation," he defines three distinct expressions of grace: Prevenient Grace, Justifying Grace, and Sanctifying Grace.[36] The next segment explains and compares Wesley's three distinct expressions of grace to an illustration of God's House of Grace: The Porch (Prevenient Grace), Entering God's House (Justifying Grace), and Moving into God's House (Sanctifying Grace).

Prevenient Grace – The Porch

What is prevenient grace? Wesley argued that God's prevenient grace is the grace that goes before us that keeps us from moving farther away from God.[37] Exodus the seventeenth chapter provides an example of prevenient grace:

> But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?" Then Moses cried out to the LORD, "What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me." The LORD answered Moses, "Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink." So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the place Massah and Meribah because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the LORD saying, "Is the LORD among us or not? (Ex. 17:3-7 NIV).

In verse six, the Lord says, "I will stand there *before you* by the rock at Horeb" (Ex. 17:6). In other words, God's prevenient grace went before the people and met them at the

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[36] John Wesley, "Sermon 43 - The Scripture Way of Salvation," in *The Sermons of John Wesley*, ed. Anne Elizabeth Powell (Nampa, ID: Wesley Center at Northwest Nazarene University, 1999), www.wesley.nnu.edu/john-wesley/the-sermons-of-john-wesley-1872-edition/sermon-43-the-scripture-way-of-salvation.

[37] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 33.

rock of Horeb. When the people grumbled to Moses, it was this prevenient grace that motivated Moses to pray and seek a connection with and solution from God. Prevenient grace was at work when God turned the Israelites grumbling and wanting to stone Moses (their sin-corrupted human will) to God's loving will.

Again, the parable of the Prodigal Son plainly illustrates prevenient grace. The writer of Luke records, "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you" (Lk. 15:17-18 NIV). The younger son in this pericope has an awakening and no longer wants to stay in his fallen state. He realizes he needs deliverance or salvation and returns home to his father. In the same manner, Watson asserts, "Prevenient grace wakes us up and causes us to realize we need to be saved. It brings us to repentance."[38] God desires that humankind recognize both its sinful state and God's offer of salvation. Thus, prevenient grace is essential because it brings humankind to the porch of God's House where humankind becomes cognizant of the need to repent, return home to the Father and begin to seek God's amazing grace.[39]

Justifying Grace – Entering into God's House

Once a person returns home to the Father and steps on the porch of God's House, the justifying grace of God works to get the person to enter the front door of God's House. Justifying grace is that grace, offered by God to all people, through which God

[38] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 33.

[39] Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin, KY: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), 40-41.

pardons the believer of sin. One finds a perfect portrait of justifying grace in Luke's gospel,

> One of the criminals who were hanged *there* was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed *are suffering* justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Lk. 23:39-43 NASB).

In this reception, one of the thieves on the cross acknowledged his sinfulness and the need for forgiveness and salvation through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. According to the *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English,* justification is the theological term for the forgiveness of sins through Jesus.[40] Hence, this justifying grace cancels guilt and empowers to resist the power of sin and to fully love God and neighbor. The former way of life is gone, and God transforms the person who then receives new life in Christ.[41] Paul's letter to the church at Corinth supports this truth, as he writes "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17-18 NIV).

Sanctifying Grace – Invitation to Move In

In addition to prevenient and justifying grace, Wesley speaks of *sanctifying grace*. Just as justification is the theological term for forgiveness of sins, sanctification is

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[40] Debbie Dodd, *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English: A Resource for English Language Learners* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1990), 85.

[41] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 33.

the theological term that refers to holiness or becoming Christ-like.[42] Thus, once a person enters into God's house, sanctifying grace or holiness invites the person to move completely in and take up residence in God's House.[43] Prevenient and justifying grace enables you to *become* a Christian, but it is sanctifying grace that enables you to *be* a Christian. Watson contends that, "Sanctifying grace works to transform people who lived by themselves (in their own shacks) into people who live in community with God and with our neighbors under one roof."[44] Zacchaeus, the tax collector, in Luke chapter nineteen presents an exemplar of sanctifying grace.

> Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Lk. 19:1-10 NIV).

In this text, Zacchaeus moved from prevenient and justifying grace to sanctifying grace. This sanctifying grace enabled Zacchaeus to love God with his heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to display a genuine love of his neighbors as himself (Mt. 22:37-38 NIV). He was willing to repay four times the amount to anybody he overtaxed so that he could be in fellowship with God and community with the people of God. Sanctifying grace

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[42] Dodd, *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English*, 135.

[43] Watson, *The Class Meeting*, 46.

[44] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 34.

sustains the believer towards a journey of Christian perfection or holiness where the believer is no longer content to just begin the process of salvation but has a yearning to finish what God intends for the believer's life.[45]

Wesley strongly believed that if left on their own, without the nurture and support of other believers, more than likely Christians would resort to their old ways of living.[46] In other words, God does not leave Christians to do this work alone, but rather provides the Church as a community of love, forgiveness, prayer, and support that facilitates discipleship formation. Clearly, this implies that the ecclesia should not be merely an assemblage of individual souls. Instead, the church must work towards developing small groups of connected, interdependent believers joined by the love and the power of the Holy Spirit.[47] Manskar submits that when small groups are properly formed and led, they are the best means of grace to do the work of restoring, reconnecting and reestablishing God's image in each human heart.[48] Like the house churches in Acts 2:42-47, sanctifying grace encourages believers to grow in love for God, neighbor, and self, and become the new creations that God created them to be.[49] In short, John Wesley preached a gospel of God's grace to the men and women who were disadvantaged and oppressed. Wesley placed those who responded to the gospel of grace into small groups where they found

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[45] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 34.

[46] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 35.

[47] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[48] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

[49] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

approval, a new sense of self-respect and a community that held them responsible for their new lives in Christ.[50] This chapter devotes the next segment to Wesley's class system.

The Class System

The method behind John Wesley's system consisted of two important components. The first component was a structure that formed people into three different groups called society meetings, class meetings and band meetings. The purpose was to provide a scaffold so believers could nurture and support each other. Comparatively to today's congregational worship, the society meeting was the largest level of organization, where believers congregated for worship, preaching, and communion.[51] D. Michael Henderson states that "The societies, with their ethical and practical teaching, became schools of holy living, complete with provisions for instruction at every level of personal spiritual development."[52]

The final level of organization was the band meeting. Unlike the class meetings, which provided an atmosphere for behavior modification, the aim of the band meeting was to facilitate emotional control by improving opinions, motives and feelings.[53] According to Henderson, the penitent band "was specially designed for those who lacked the will power or personal discipline to live up to the behavioral demands of the class

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[50] Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," 84.

[51] John O. Gooch, *John Wesley for the Twenty-First Century: Set Apart for Social Witness* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1996), 9.

[52] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings*, 88.

[53] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings*, 110.

meeting but still had a desire to overcome their personal problems."[54] Separated by gender, the group consisted of about six people. In the band meetings, members would admit how they had fallen short by confessing specific sins, and then ask for forgiveness.[55]

The second component of Wesley's class system was the structure of accountability which he embedded in the class and band meetings. When holding these meetings, Wesley's followers confessed their struggles, sins, and shortcomings. Much like a Weight Watchers program, members within the class and band meetings offered encouragement, prayed for each other, and held each other responsible for their behaviors.[56] Through confessions and sharing of one's struggles, the members of the class were more apt to make a change in their lives. James 5:16 affirms this truth, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16). In their book, *Transformational Groups*, authors Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger wrote,

> Living in community with other believers, wrestling through real issues, embracing the gospel together, reminding one another of our identity in Christ, loving and holding one accountable for involvement in the spiritual disciplines, and watching the way authentic Christians do life is God's transformative platform.[57]

As a result, Wesley devoted himself to doing whatever he could to produce an atmosphere that encouraged people and cultivated them to grow in their newfound

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[54] Henderson, *John Wesley's Class Meetings*, 122.

[55] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 44.

[56] Gooch, *John Wesley for the 21st Century*, 11.

[57] Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger, *Transformational Groups* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2014), 53.

relationship with God.[58] His experience showed him that when Christians ground their good intentions in a committed way of living, those intentions are much more likely to come to life. Conversely, when support systems and accountability are not in place, over time Christians will often fall into a state of apostasy without realizing it.[59] In his journal on August 25, Wesley expounds on this revelation,

> I was more convinced than ever that the preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these twenty years all over Pembrokeshire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection. And the consequence is that nine in ten of the once awakened are now faster asleep than ever.[60]

In addition to the class system and accountability, Wesleyan Theology emphasized the Christian practice of reading the Bible and searching the scriptures in order to discover God's guidance and direction. Interestingly, Wesley made a distinction between reading of scripture in the context of worship service and personally spending time searching the scriptures. Wesley realized that hearing a fifteen to thirty-minute sermon preached once a week was not enough for believers to learn about the Bible. In addition to hearing sermons, Wesley required Christians to read and study the Bible on their own in order to seek God's will and God's direction.[61] In short, studying the scriptures was critical in Wesley's approach to discipleship. In his preface to *Sermons on Several Occasions,* Wesley wrote, "I want to know one thing, the way to heaven – how to land safe on that happy shore. God himself has condescended to teach the way… He hath written it down

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[58] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship,* 38.

[59] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship,* 39.

[60] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship,* 39.

[61] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship,* 86.

in a book. O give me that book! ...I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me."[62] Again, for Wesley, searching the scriptures was not just to obtain knowledge, but also for receiving direction on how to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ.[63]

John Wesley rejected spiritual laziness from the people who were a part of his class system. Instead, his theology demanded that the people obligate themselves to a lifestyle that reflected and replicated the teachings of Christ—a life of holiness. He designed his class system to foster a relationship with Christ and others that would facilitate spiritual maturity and discipleship formation.[64]

Conclusion

A major conviction of this chapter is that the Wesleyan Theology has an explicit and detailed method of fostering the formation of disciples. In the formation of Wesleyan Theology, John entwined his theological convictions, the experiences of his own spiritual path, and the proven methods of other Christian leaders such as Spener, Francke, Zinzendorf, and the Moravians into a structure that addressed the needs of his members. He designed Wesleyan Theology to make sure Christianity was not just a set of ideas, but a way life. Kenneth Garder summarized Wesley's effectiveness as a preacher in these words: "The heart of Wesley's preaching was a lively sense of God's grace at work at every level of creation and history in individuals and communities. Central to his own life

[62] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 86.

[63] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 86-87.

[64] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship*, 41.

and preaching was 'the order of salvation' how individuals and communities experience the fullness of God's prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace."[65]

At the core of Wesleyan Theology and practice was the profound understanding and vital experience of grace. As the members yielded to the gospel of grace, Wesley organized them into new groups where each found a new sense of self-respect, acceptance and a family of believers that held them accountable.[66] John Wesley strongly believed that these small groups educed the spiritual life of New Testament Christianity that began in Acts 2:42-47 where the new converts met from house to house to study the apostles' doctrine resulting in discipleship formation. The mission of the church is not to make good members but to make faithful disciples. Since the beginning of the church, God used small groups to form God's people. Christians find small groups are interesting and alluring because the small group setting is more intimate in a way that is different from Sunday morning worship service. The very layout of small groups provides a climate of support and nurture for participants to learn, share, challenge each other and grow in their spiritual formation as they experience deep, sincere, genuine faith with others. Miller asserts that people who are actively engaged in a small Bible Study group demonstrated spiritual signs of discipleship.[67] In his book, *Small Groups and Accountability: The Wesleyan Way of Christian Formation,* Steve Manskar says, "It

[65] Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," 84.

[66] Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," 84.

[67] Craig Kennet Miller, *Postmoderns: The Beliefs, Hope and Fears of Young Americans (1965-1981*) (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1996), 169-183.

seems people have re-discovered the value and power of what John Wesley called 'conferencing' for building community and forming Christian faith and character."[68]

Small groups are essential to discipleship. This Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," presents a simple yet, didactic proposal for maturing and equipping the saints through the ministry of small group Bible study at Russell Temple Church. Intertwining the basic tenets of Wesleyan Theology, this project implements the use of John Wesley's class meetings or small Bible study group model to nurture one's discipleship formation with a focus on sin, salvation, grace, including prevenient grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. The next chapter will provide an exploration and investigation of an interdisciplinary approach that correlates to the Doctor of Ministry project.

[68] Manskar, "Small Groups and Accountability," omits.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/2002-8-manskar.pdf.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

This chapter identifies and investigates ways in which the interdisciplinary field of education and the theory of cognitivism informs and relates to the theme, hypothesis, and solution of the Doctor of Ministry project. The problem present at Russell Temple Church is that the members do not understand how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace are essential to discipleship formation. Consequently, if the members participate in a small group Bible study pertaining to discipleship formation, then they will learn how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace undergird their faith formation. Thus, the topic that this Doctor of Ministry project explores is "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups." The theme throughout this doctoral project is studying and understanding God's Word fosters discipleship formation. Exploration of another discipline besides theological disciplines will augment the scope, depth, and efficacy of the project. This chapter has three sections. The introduction provides an overview of education and the cognitive theory of learning. The main body consists of an exploration of education and its three main theories, a justification for choosing cognitivism as the interdisciplinary theory, and an explanation of how cognitivism addresses and contributes to the hypothesis and solution of the Doctor of Ministry project. The summary shows how education and cognitivism are foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project.

Introduction

This Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," addresses a simple yet, innovative educational plan for discipling the members through the ministry of small group Bible study at Russell Temple CME Church. Discipleship does not happen overnight; rather, discipleship is a lifelong process that occurs gradually through an ever-deepening relationship with Jesus and His Church. Before Jesus' ascension, He launched an educational plan for reaching the nations with His good news. He commissions His disciples to make disciples. Then, Jesus instructs the Apostles to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Furthermore, in the Book of Acts, Luke writes, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship" (Acts 2:42).

Through education believers mature in Jesus Christ. One finds the process of teaching and educating disciples throughout the Bible. The gospel of Matthew says, "When Jesus had finished giving instructions His twelve disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities" (Mt. 11:1). Mark reveals, "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples" (Mk. 4:34). The phrases "giving instruction" and "expounded all things to his disciples," demonstrate how Jesus used education to impart knowledge and understanding. Jesus was not just a Savior, but a teacher and mentor who walked with His disciples for three years instructing, teaching, and educating them in spiritual truths. Jesus used daily opportunities to educate and train His disciples. In Acts 2, the apostles establish and implement Jesus' educational construct for making disciples, "And they

continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship." Thus, the interdisciplinary study of education is the key to teaching and training disciples (Acts 2:42).

In addition, Jesus did not just teach so that the disciples would become more knowledgeable, but He taught with the expectation that the disciples would utilize and apply the knowledge to advance the kingdom of God. Luke speaks to this concept, recording that "The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name'" (Lk. 10:1-17). In this Lukan text, Jesus uses the cognitivism learning theory. Cognitivism focuses on the transmission of information from someone who knows, such as a teacher or expert, to a learner or student who does not know.[1]

Likewise, in order to implement the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," the interdisciplinary field of education and its cognitivism theory of learning relates to and informs the problem and solution to discipleship formation among the members of Russell Temple CME Church. Using the cognitivism theory in a small educational setting, the Bible study teachers will instruct, explain and discuss biblical concepts and themes (knowledge) to the students to facilitate discipleship formation. Through this teaching paradigm students will be able to listen, process, discuss, ask questions, and acquire the knowledge, understanding and the skills that will facilitate discipleship formation. The next section explores the interdisciplinary field of education and its three main theories, a justification for choosing

[1] David C. Leonard, *Learning Theories: A to Z: Non-Senses* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2002), 29, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

cognitivism as the educational learning theory, as well as an explanation of how cognitivism, as the educational learning theory, addresses and contributes to the hypothesis and solution of the Doctor of Ministry project.

Education and Main Theories

What is the interdisciplinary study of education? The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines education as, "the knowledge of skill obtained or developed by a learning process; the field of study that is concerned with teaching and learning pedagogy."[2] The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* states that education is, "the knowledge and development resulting from the process of being educated."[3] In his book, *For What Child*, L. Lawrence Riccio presents another clarification of education as he writes "Education has multiple definitions—the term is derived from the Latin word *educo,* or the 'drawing out' of an individual's inherent qualities. The Athenians of ancient Greece defined education similarly, as a leading out from the individual information that was already within her."[4] Donald L. Griggs, the author of *Teaching Today's Teachers to Teach,* offers yet a further explanation of the term, writing that "Education is what prepares children, youth, and adults to live responsible, hopeful and productive lives."[5]

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[2] *The American Heritage Dictionary*, 2nd college ed. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 439.

[3] *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "education (n.)," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/education.

[4] L. Lawrence Riccio, *For What Child* (Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense, 2014), 2, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=780598/&login.asp%3tcustid%3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[5] Donald L. Griggs, *Teaching Today's Teachers to Teach* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 11.

Griggs further explains that "education is the conduit through which teachers are given the knowledge and skills to be successful with those they teach."[6] Education is the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and beliefs. Education frequently takes place under the guidance of educators; however, learners can also educate themselves. Education can take place in formal or informal settings and any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts may be considered education.[7]

Although many different approaches to learning exist, one can classify the spectrum of learning theories into three basic types: behaviorism, cognitivism and constructivism. Learning theories are vital for effective teaching as they describe how students absorb, process, and retain knowledge during learning.[8] The next section briefly explores the three learning theories by covering four different elements for each theory. These different elements include a short historical introduction, a discussion of the view of knowledge presupposed by the theory, an account of how the theory treats learning and student motivation, and, finally, an overview of an instructional method or strategy promoted by the theory.

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[6] Griggs, *Teaching Today's Teachers to Teach*, 11.

[7] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1944), 1–4.

[8] Kaya Yilmaz, "The Positive Perspective on Learning: Its Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for Classroom Practices," *Clearing House* 84, no. 5 (September 2011): 204, https://doi:10.1080/000986555.2011.568989.

Behaviorism

Behaviorism stems from the work of Edward Thorndike, Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, and Burrhus Frederic Skinner, who believed that learning is a change in observable behaviors.[9] Thorndike, the founder of modern educational psychology, is known for his work in the learning theory development of operant conditioning within behaviorism. Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, is known primarily for his work in classical conditioning. Skinner, an American psychologist and behaviorist, developed the theory of behaviorism.

Behaviorism is a worldview that assumes a learner is essentially passive, responding to environmental stimuli. Behaviorists assume that the learner starts off with a clean or blank slate and positive or negative reinforcement shapes behavior. Behaviorists focus on learning as affected by changes in behavior. They concluded that given the right environmental influences, all learners acquire identical understanding and that all students can learn. David C. Leonard conveys in his book, *Learning Theories: A to Z: A to Z*, that behaviorism is a learning theory centered on the concept that conditioning forms all behaviors. Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment or an external stimulus.

Behaviorists believe that the person's reactions to environmental stimuli affects the person's actions.[10] Leonard further discloses that one attains learning or education by observable, measurable, and controllable objectives established by the teacher and met by the students who produce a specific set of responses built upon a controlled set of

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[9] D. C. Phillips, *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publishers, Inc., 2014), 79-81, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=800416&login.asp%3fcustid%3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[10] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 16, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

stimuli.[11] Similarly, D. C. Phillips in his book, *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, holds that learning happens when new behaviors or changes in behaviors are obtained through connections or associations between stimuli and responses. According to B. F. Skinner, behavior is a learned response reinforced by the consequences resulting from that behavior. Thus, association leads to a change in behavior caused by external stimuli in the environment.[12]

This behaviorism theory majorly impacted teaching, training and instruction. In a classroom setting, the teacher designs learning objectives with specific behavior outcomes from the student in mind. The teacher organizes learning tasks from easy to difficult. Through informal and formal assessments, such as observations and exams, the teacher can adjust the stimuli or modify the outcomes throughout the learning process so that the learner succeeds consistently and achieves learning objectives.[13] The role of the teacher is to provide the stimulus or motivation for the behavioral outcome. On the other hand, the role of the student is to produce changes in behavior (learning), based on connections or links caused by the teacher's stimuli or motivations.[14] An example of a behaviorism strategy is when teachers reward their classes or certain students for doing extra work. With positive stimuli, students are more likely to repeat the behavior.

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[11] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 16, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[12] Phillips, *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy*, 81-82, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=800416&login.asp%3fcustid%3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[13] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 16, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[14] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 16, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

Examples of positive motivations and stimuli include verbal praise, reward systems, continual feedback, and positive reinforcement.

In conclusion, behaviorism defines learning as nothing more than the acquisition of new behavior (learning) based on environmental conditions. This theory mainly focuses on observable stimulus-response behaviors that persons learn through external stimuli as opposed to internal events like thinking and emotions. An obvious advantage of behaviorism is its ability to define behavior clearly and to measure changes or learning through observable behaviors.

Cognitivism

How do people learn, remember, and solve problems? Questions about learning, memory and cognition instigated research into a new learning theory. One can trace the origin of cognitivism as a learning theory back to the 1960s.[15] Craik and Lockhard proposed that "learning comes from mental activity such as memory, motivation, thinking and reflection."[16] Cognitivism focuses on the transmission of information from someone who knows, such as an expert as opposed to a facilitator, to learners who do not know. In her article, "The Cognitive Perspective on Learning: Its Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for Classroom Practices," Kaya Yilmaz states that cognitivism replaced behaviorism as the leading learning theory because the behaviorist traditions could not explain how mental processes were essential to cognitive

[15] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 29-30, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[16] F. I. M. Craik and R. S. Lockhard, "Levels of Processing: A Framework for Memory Research," *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior* 11, no. 6 (1972): 671-684.

development.[17] Several psychologists such as Edward Chase Tolman, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner, contributed to the shift from behaviorism to cognitive theories.[18] Tolman, an American psychologist, developed a perspective that behavior was mainly mental or cognitive. Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, is known for his work on how children develop intellectually throughout childhood. Vygotsky, a Soviet psychologist, was involved in the study of infant and child behavior. Bruner, an American psychologist, made major contributions to the cognitive learning theory in educational psychology.

Unlike behaviorism, which does not concern itself with the learner's internal constructs, cognitivism focuses on how the brain receives, internalizes and recalls information.[19] David Leonard states that, "Human thinking is a process of collecting data (input) from the external world, manipulating the objects and transforming them into symbolic representations in the mind that depict logically what is perceived in the external world, and describing them through speech, writing, and drawing (output)."[20] Simply stated, cognitivists believe that the human mind operates like a computer: data or information comes into the mind (input), the mind processes data, the mind stores data in memory, and data is retrieved, which leads to certain outcomes (output).

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[17] Yilmaz, "The Cognitive Perspective on Learning," 204, https://doi:10.1080/000986555.2011.568989.

[18] Yilmaz, "The Cognitive Perspective on Learning," 204, https://doi:10.1080/000986555.2011.568989.

[19] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 16, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[20] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 29, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

In a cognitivism-based classroom, the teacher focuses on the whole person: social, emotional, physical and cognitive (intellectual) by attending to student questions, uncovering student interests and then providing opportunities for the student to explore these interests. In addition, the teacher guides students through the problem-solving process, while allowing them to use their own mental capacities to find solutions. Utilizing this learning theory has several benefits. First, it encourages students to reflect on their experiences. Secondly, it encourages discussion about the lessons and assists students to find new solutions to problems. Furthermore, it helps students to discover how ideas and concepts are connected.[21]

Numerous instructional strategies exist that facilitate a constructivist learning setting. One instructional strategy is Mind Mapping. A Mind Map is a diagram used to visually organize or outline information and to show relationships among the pieces of the whole. Mind Mapping helps students to better generate, connect, analyze, synthesize, and recall new concepts. The Mind Map process begins with placing the main theme or topic in the center of a web-like design i.e. grace. Then one adds branches to the main theme such as prevenient grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. The branches are subtopics related to the main theme or topic. The subtopics allows the learner to make connections and associations with the main theme. Higher order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and association are augmented as learning takes place.

In summary**,** cognitivism deals with how people perceive and remember information, solve problems and ultimately learn. An important concept is that the student constructs mental maps in the brain and learning is the means by which these

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[21] Yilmaz, "The Cognitive Perspective on Learning," 207-208, https://doi:10.1080/000986555.2011.568989.

mental structures are understood. Much like a computer, cognitivism deals with learning inputs, outputs, and the understanding of the inner processing with the mind. In an educational setting, the teacher (expert) is responsible for the transmission of knowledge to the students. When the learner understands how to apply knowledge in different contexts, the learning has occurred. For example, a student learns how to write persuasive papers in an English class. This same skill is later applied in law school when the student is asked to write a persuasive closing argument.

Constructivism

One can trace the genesis of constructivism back to the distinguished work of Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner.[22] They believed that the learner constructs a mental model of the world based upon existing cognitive structures. Constructivists view people as "goal-directed agents who actively seek information."[23] Through the process of assimilation, the learner can organize, interpret, adjust, and acquire new information based on prior knowledge.[24] This is in opposition to the behaviorist theory that students are blank slates waiting for the instructor to fill them with knowledge. Instead, students learn to construct meaning by linking their previous experiences and knowledge to new experiences and knowledge.[25]

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[22] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 38, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

[23] National Research Council, *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School,* expanded ed. (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000), 10, https://idol.org/10.17226/6160.

[24] National Research Council, *How People Learn*, 10, https://idol.org/10.17226/6160.

[25] National Research Council, *How People Learn*, 14-15, https://idol.org/10.17226/6160.

Jill Cole states in her book, *Teaching the Way Students Learn: Practical Applications for Putting Theories into Action*, "Constructivism is a learner-centric educational paradigm, in which content is constructed by the learners in a team-based collaborative learning environment rather than by the instructor."[26] Additionally, Cole suggests that students are able to construct or learn new knowledge by connecting to current knowledge and experience. Learning occurs as students adjust existing understanding to accommodate new experiences.[27] For example, a student who has already learned to alphabetize words by the first letter is now able to use this previous knowledge to make connections in learning how to alphabetize words to the second letter for words such as: act, apple, away. Students construct new knowledge and understanding based on what they already knew and understood.

The concept of constructivism influenced several disciplines including education. In constructivism, the teacher or instructor, serves more as a facilitator as opposed to the expert or conduit of knowledge between the student and the learning experience. Within constructivism, the teacher acts as a catalyst, coach or program manager to facilitate, assist and oversee the process of learning through learner inquiry, group collaboration, and discovery.[28] Through guided exploration, reflection and evaluation, students work collaborative in group settings to construct meaning and answers. Within constructivism,

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[26] Jill E. Cole, *Teaching the Way Students Learn: Practical Application for Putting Theories into Action* (Lanham, MD: R and L Education, 2012), 1, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct =true&db=nlebk&AN=463838&lognin.asp%3fcustid%3ds4132146&site-ehost-live.

[27] Cole, *Teaching the Way Students Learn*, 1, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=463838&lognin.asp%3fcustid%3ds4132146&site-ehost-live.

[28] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 38, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct-true&db=nlebk&AN=86647/&login.asp%3tcustid% 3ds4132146&site=ehost-live.

there is often more than one way to approach an answer and there may be more than one correct answer. Moreover, a constructivist approach recognizes the validity of many points of view.[29] In a constructivism-rich environment, the teacher facilitates learning by probing and posing questions to assess understanding, but also to pique interest and promote class discussions, debates, and inquiry. The students' queries, views and input are valued and essential to the process of discovery while connecting the new learning to the students' lives and real-life.[30] The lesson entwines both informal and formal assessment of the student work.

There are several instructional strategies to facilitate a constructivist learning environment; one example is *Think-Pair-Share*.[31] This is a collaborative learning approach where students work cooperatively as partners to solve a problem or answer a question.[32] This approach is necessary because students fear mocking when challenged by questions that are beyond their level of understanding or when students need more time to process the question. On average, students need about three to five seconds to process the question, access the information, and formulate an answer. Asking students to *think* by themselves, *pair* with another student, and then *share* their ideas with their partner, gives students time to think, access information, discuss and share with a partner

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[29] Leonard, *Learning Theories*, 18, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?

[30] Cole, *Teaching the Way Students Learn*, 2-3, https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=463838&lognin.asp%3fcustid%3ds4132146&site-ehost-live.

[31] Jay McTighe and Frank T. Lyman Jr., "Cueing Thinking in the Classroom: The Promise of Theory-Embedded Tools," *Educational Leadership* 45, no. 7 (April 1988): 19.

[32] Gayle H. Gregory and Carolyn Chapman, *Differentiated Instructional Strategies: One Size Doesn't Fit All* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 2002), 8.

and formulate better answers.[33] For example, the teacher poses the question: "What is a biblical example or illustration of justifying grace?" Then the teacher would prompt the students to *think* about the answer for one minute (the time limit can vary depending on the level of the students and the complexity of the question or assignment). Next, the teacher would prompt the students to *pair* with a partner (preferably someone sitting next to or across from the student) and then *share* answers. Again, the teacher would give a time limit for the students to share with one another. After that, the teacher may call on a few individuals to share their answers with the entire class. There are many benefits to using the *Think-Pair-Share* strategy in a constructivist class setting. First it gives students time to think individually about a question, topic or problem. Secondly, it builds the student's thinking and verbal communication skills by sharing ideas with other classmates. Thirdly, it promotes active engagement and participation. Lastly, it facilitates new information, different viewpoints, and alternative solutions to a problem.

Another instructional strategy is the use of the K-W-L Chart.[34] The K-W-L Chart is a graphic organizer that helps students organize their prior knowledge by linking it to their new knowledge. The letters in K-W-L stands for what students already *know (k)*, *want* to know (w), and ultimately *learn (l)*. From an instructional point of view, what does the K-W-L Strategy look like in a classroom setting? The Bible study class is starting a new Bible Study unit and the teacher announces that the new unit is entitled, "How to Get to Heaven." After passing out the K-W-L Chart, the teacher may pose the question, "What do you KNOW about heaven?" Students would then begin to list under

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[33] Gregory and Chapman, *Differentiated Instructional Strategies*, 8.

[34] Donna Ogle, "K-W-L: A Teaching Model That Develops Active Reading of Expository Text," *Reading Teacher* 39 (1986): 564-570.

the "K" section of the organizer, all the things they *know* about the topic. After a certain period, the teacher may ask the students to share their responses with a partner, small group or with the entire group. Then, the teacher would then pose a second question, "What do you WANT to learn about heaven?" Students would list what they want to learn in the form of a question. For example, "Where is heaven? Who lives in heaven?" Then, the teacher would again ask the students to share their queries with a partner, a small group or with the entire group. Lastly, the teacher would either lecture or provide resources for the students to read to find answers to their questions. Once the lecture or the reading assignment ends, students complete the "L" section of the K-W-L Chart, "What have you LEARNED about the topic?" The "L" section will consist of answers to questions written in the "W" section, will consist of new information learned while listening to the lecture or reading the material, or will consist of correcting information that was inaccurate under the "K" section. There are many benefits to using the K-W-L strategy. First, the strategy allows the student to organize the student's thinking in a constructive format. Secondly, it relates new concepts or ideas to previously learned information. Thirdly, it encourages note taking and summarizing. Lastly, students can assess their own learning by comparing, analyzing and synthesizing each segment of the K-W-L Chart.[35]

In conclusion, constructivism learning theory emphasizes communication and social skills as well as intellectual collaboration. The role of the teacher is to prompt and facilitate learning through questions, discussion, and discovery. Constructivism posits that students learn by constructing new knowledge through connections of current

[35] Gregory and Chapman, *Differentiated Instructional Strategies*, 87.

knowledge and experiences. Constructivism promotes student agency, collaboration among peers that in turn promotes diverse viewpoints, develops advance skills such as critical thinking and analysis, and gives students ownership of what they learn.

Which learning theory is best suited for the Doctor of Ministry project? How will this theory address and contribute to the hypothesis and solution of the project? In response to these challenges and unanswered questions, the goal of this section is to justify and explain how education and the learning theory of cognitivism addresses and support the hypothesis and solution of the project. In the article, "Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism: Comparing Critical Features From an Instructional Design Perspective," the authors Ertmer and Newby propose that as one moves along the spectrum from behaviorism to cognitivism to constructivism, the emphasis of instruction changes from teaching to learning, from passive learning of facts and procedures to the active involvement, and from application of concepts to problem solving.[36] Each of the three different learning theories have tremendous merit, but as previously discussed, they involve varying levels of effort to properly train teachers to employ these theories. Additionally, the theories vary in their ability to progressively expand the capacity of the learner. Therefore, a thorough understanding of the education process and the three theories are invaluable in knowing how to effectively communicate and instruct others on increasing their biblical education. Therefore, this project chooses the discipline of education and the Cognitive Theory to inform the approach of the Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups."

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[36] Peggy A. Ertmer and Timothy J. Newby, "Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism: Critical Features from an Instructional Design Perspective," *Performance Improvement Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (October 2008): 66, DOI:10.1111/j/1937-8327.1993.tb00605x.

Cognitivism is the most appropriate learning theory for the project because it involves a more individually tailored approach and focuses on how the brain receives, internalizes, and recalls information. Jesus' teaching was effective because he often incorporated cognitivism strategies, such as parables, in his pedagogy. The Parable of the Sower in Matthew chapter thirteen, verses three through nine, supports the significance of using parables as a cognitive technique. As an expert teacher, Jesus helps his disciples build upon their prior knowledge and understanding of the terms, farmer, seed, soil, thorn, to connect and apply new concepts to what they already know. For example, the farmer represents Jesus, the seed represents the word of God, the soil represents the heart and the thorn represent bitterness. When the learner understands how to apply knowledge in different contexts, then transfer has occurred.

As a retired teacher with more than thirty-five years of experience in educating students in elementary and middle school, several years of teaching graduate students, as well as having the responsibility of training new, inexperienced teachers and seasoned teachers, I advocate for cognitivism. The actual goal of instruction is to communicate or transfer knowledge to students in the most effective and efficient. This theory emphasizes making knowledge meaningful and helping learners organize and relate new information to existing knowledge in memory. Secondly, the cognitivism learning theory is easier to teach and requires less time to train than constructivism, especially those who have little to no teaching experience. Also, the cognitive strategies are simple to explain and can be easily used with a biblical text. For these reasons, cognitivism theory works best for this project.

In summary, this content section presented a well-researched analysis of the interdisciplinary field of education and its learning theories. In addition, this section also offered an excellent in-depth explanation and justification for choosing cognitivism as the learning theory and how cognitivism will provide relevant interdisciplinary answers to support the Doctor of Ministry hypothesis. The last section will summarize how the interdisciplinary field of education and cognitivism are foundational to the Doctor of Ministry project.

Conclusion

One cannot underestimate or devalue the role of the interdisciplinary field of education in the formation of discipleship, as if discipleship formation requires no outside input or guidance. The interdisciplinary field of education transforms converts into disciples. Writing as a trained and experienced Christian educator for more than forty years, teaching is a part of a collective discipleship process consisting of friendships, fellowships, and relationships. The collective discipleship process also consists of formal events, intentional conversations, and personal disciplines such as prayer, worship, fasting and Bible study. Jesus' ministry exhibited the way in which teaching, and discipleship are indistinguishable from each other. Jesus was often called teacher (Jn. 13:13). Even the Jewish authorities viewed his ministry as that of a teacher (Mt. 8:19). If the goal of teaching for discipleship is to produce persons who are "mature in Christ," the interdisciplinary field of education should shape a maturity that students' thoughts, feelings, and actions reflect (Col. 1:28-29). The learning theory of cognitivism allows students to think and not just memorize facts, like the theory of behaviorism. Cognitivism

allows students to discover the meaning and associations of concepts and themes beyond mere words and mere facts. A cognitive approach to learning allows the learner to have more than a “sound bite” theology where the learner can say short and catchy phrases but cannot explain what they mean with any structure or connections to the Christian faith.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this project analysis chapter is to summarize the research conducted and provide a detailed application for ministry. This research project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," provides a paradigm to foster maturation towards spiritual growth and discipleship formation through satellite Bible study small groups. After careful observation by the pastor, most members are not as biblically knowledgeable to live out the mission formulated by Jesus in Matthew chapter twenty-eight, verses nineteen through twenty, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

This research project, "Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups," addresses how small Bible study groups can provide increased opportunities for the members to grow in the knowledge of the Word to encourage spiritual maturity and foster discipleship formation. In addition, the hypothesis for this project states if the participants develop an understanding of sin, salvation, and grace through a six-week Bible study, then they will grow in biblical literacy which will foster discipleship formation.

Dr. Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church, cites in the preface of Alan Andrews' book, *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formations,* "One of the great problems in churches today is the perpetual immaturity of the members. Too many members grow old without growing up."[1] Warren further states, "It is possible to attend church your whole life and never grow into Christlike maturity. It takes far more than sermons to produce a disciple."[2] This is also true of the membership at Russell Temple CME Church. The majority of those who attend Bible study consistently are developing and maturing as disciples of Christ, whereas those who do not attend Bible study are lacking in biblical education which is impacting their spiritual maturity. It takes far more than sermons to make disciples. The next section synthesizes the scholastic disquisition and integrates the investigative work of each of the four foundational chapters, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary.

The biblical foundation of forming small groups for discipleship development emanates from the New Testament scripture, Acts chapter two verses forty-two through forty-seven:

> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the LORD added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:42-47).

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[1] Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 10.

[2] Andrews, *The Kingdom Life,* 10.

An overview of Acts chapter two verses forty-two through forty-seven demonstrates the biblical foundation, support, and advocacy for biblical education through satellite Bible study groups. The home was the primary institution of society, and therefore, the context where families of believers gathered and fellowshipped in small groups in their homes. These small house meetings nurtured the believers' faith and biblical knowledge from infancy to maturity. The premise of the house meetings or small groups was to promote a shared life in Christ collectively and to cultivate spiritual growth and discipleship formation among the followers of Christ. This biblical model is also substantiated in the New Testament writings found in Acts 5:42, Philemon 1:2, 1 Cor. 16:19 and Col. 4:15.

Additionally, the historical foundation of Bible study groups for discipleship formation are witnessed in several prominent historic figures. Notably, the contributions of Anthony Horneck, Phillip Jakob Spener and Count Nikolaus Ludwig van Zinzendorf, the Moravians and John Wesley helped to revive, further develop, and propagate the home Bible study small groups during the Protestant Reformation. These men believed that the sermon alone on Sundays during the worship service did not provide sufficient study of the Word because the sermon only covered a small portion of the Word. Thus, like the biblical foundation model of Acts 2:42-47, small Bible study meetings were organized to promote the study of the Word, and increase Bible literacy among the congregation; thus, facilitating spiritual growth and discipleship development. Like the first century churches, these small Bible study groups were held in the congregants' homes. Moreover, John Wesley also held his small Bible study groups, called class meetings, in shops, attics or wherever convenient for the members of the church to attend.

Regarding the theological foundation relevant to this topic, Wesleyan theology is selected to support the premise and practice of discipleship development through small Bible study groups. The project addresses the nature of Wesleyan theological reflected in these three distinctive theological disciplines: salvation, sin, and grace. The theological aspects of grace include prevenient grace (the necessity of conversion), justifying grace (forgiveness and repentance), and sanctifying grace (living a lifestyle of holiness in communion with God, self, and community). At the heart of Wesleyan theology and practice was the deep understanding and essential experience of God's grace. As the membership surrendered to the gospel of grace, John Wesley organized them into classes or small groups where these new members found a sense of belonging, accountability, and an identity in Christ as they prayed and studied God's Word together.[3] The Bible has a voice and if given the chance to speak, in context, it will create an amazing transformation in the life of the believer. John Wesley strongly believed that his small Bible study groups embodied the biblical model found in Acts 2:42-47 as well as those established by historic figures such as Horneck, Spener and the Moravians, where the new converts met from house to house, in small intimate settings, to study the apostles' doctrine or the Word of God, resulting in discipleship development.

Lastly, the interdisciplinary foundation identified and investigated the field of education. Perry Downs, the author of *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education*, acknowledged that some Christians opposed the social sciences to inform the development of Christian education. Downs contends, "When properly understood, science and theology are not contradictory in nature but present a more

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[3] Kenneth L. Carder, "Proclaiming the Gospel of Grace," in *Theology and Evangelism in the Wesleyan Heritage*, ed. James C. Logan (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 84.

complete picture of reality tan can be achieved by viewing either the social science or theology exclusively."[4] The scriptures demand that the church educates its people for spiritual growth. As a matter of fact, the church played a major role in the emergence of institutions of higher education such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Stanford and virtually all the major universities in the United States. These schools of higher learning or seminaries were established to educate and equip ministers for ministry, thus bridging the social science of education with theology. Teaching is central to the Lord's plan, indicating its centrality in the life of the church. The first century church continued with an emphasis in teaching. As a biblical foundation, Luke records "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). As a result of their teaching and relationships, both with God and each other, the believers were being transformed into disciples of Christ.

The discussion of the interdisciplinary science of education began with a look at the theory of cognitivism which emanated from several notable educational psychologists such as Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and Jerome Bruner.[5] Cognitivists sought to focus on the whole person: social, emotional, physical, and cognitively (intellectual) by attending to student questions, guiding students through the problem-solving process while encouraging students to reflect on their own personal experience. In the book, *How the Brain Learns,* David A Sousa states, "Cognitive research supports the notion that transfer occurs more easily if students have processed the initial learning in ways that promote

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[4] Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 14.

[5] Kaya Yilmaz, "The Positive Perspective on Learning: Its Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for Classroom Practices," *Clearing House* 84, no. 5 (September 2011): 204, https://doi:10.1080/000986555.2011.568989.

deep, abstract understanding of the material rather than emphasizing the rote application of superficial similarities." [6] The implementation of cognitive learning strategies such as fostering engagement, building background knowledge, integrating Bloom's Taxonomy for critical thinking as well as using graphic organizers supported the research.

In conclusion, these four foundational perspectives, biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary, support this research project to educate the members of the church in its biblical mandate to make disciples of Christ. The next segment examines the research process, the subsequent findings, and explicates the conclusive statement regarding the solution to the problem addressed and considers opportunities for further exploration of this Doctor of Ministry project.

Methodology

The project created an opportunity to collect research findings by developing and employing a survey instrument to assess and measure the biblical knowledge acquired during a six-week Bible study. Quantitative data was collected. To establish a baseline, the human research subjects were administered the Pre-Biblical Literacy Assessment virtually using the Zoom polling feature a week before the six-week satellite Bible study project began. At the end of the six-weeks, the same test was administered again to measure growth. Both the pre- and post-Biblical Literary Assessment consisted of twenty multiple choice questions. In addition to the Biblical Literacy Assessment, a pre- and post-quiz was given online virtually each week at the beginning and end of each Bible study lesson using the Zoom polling feature. Each quiz consisted of five multiple choice

[6] David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2011), 159.

questions which aligned with the unit objectives and the Bible lesson for that weekly lesson. Lastly, a post group interview session was scheduled to access how certain spiritual concepts nurtured the participants' faith formation.

Additionally, three observers helped to gather additional data. The observers used a checklist, consisting of twelve questions, to gather data to measure the fidelity of the lesson. This information and feedback were shared with the teachers immediately following the lesson. This immediate feedback was a key component to delivering better learning outcomes for both the teachers and the students. The relevant and positive feedback from the observers reinforced knowledge, encouraged inquiry, prompted reflection and adjustment that improved performance outcomes for both teacher and the student. As the teachers improved their pedagogical practices and gained a greater understanding of the teaching dynamic, the student learning and comprehension increased.

How were the participants chosen? Initially, the pastor held a church conference at the church in January 2020 and each subsequent month to give an overview of the proposed project and to address any questions or concerns that arose. The objective was to inspire the members who were not attending the Wednesday night Bible study to start attending Bible study. During the months of July and August 2020, commercials and advertisements were shown during the worship service to inform the congregation about the upcoming Bible study and to share the benefits of attending Bible study. A flyer with the information about the upcoming Bible study series was emailed weekly to the membership during the month of August. In addition, church announcements during the

worship service and weekly email blasts were used to recruit the members to register for the upcoming Bible study series.

Also, a context associate created the registration form and emailed it to the membership. Two context associates volunteered to call the members of the church and encouraged them to register for the upcoming Bible study. Furthermore, the context associates, teachers, and those who were regular attendees of Bible study encouraged members to participate in the project.

The two context associates previously mentioned compiled a list of eleven people who were not attending Bible study. These eleven were invited to a Zoom meeting which presented an overview of the project. In addition, the responsibilities of the human research subjects were discussed, questions were clarified, and concerns were addressed. Following this initial meeting, one of the registrars contacted each of the eleven individually to confirm whether they would participate in the satellite Bible study project as a human research subject. All eleven agreed to participate in the project. A cover letter, Human Research Subject Consent Form, and the Bible study covenant were mailed to each person with a return, addressed, stamped envelope for them to return the signed consent form and the covenant to the researcher.

There were several methods used to effect change. The main catalyst used to effect change was the cognitivism educational design and layout of the curriculum, “God’s Amazing Grace” and the positive classroom climate facilitated by the teachers. The selection of the Bible study topics and scriptures, the rich class discussions, as well as the design of the lesson provided an optimal learning environment conducive for learning. The curriculum was the same for each group. The three small groups met

weekly for one hour for six weeks. The co-teaching model was an excellent way to facilitate student learning. The teachers encouraged the students to learn and absorb the lesson in the Bible study in a way that was meaningful and relevant to them. By using the cognitivism theory as a model for biblical education, the teachers were able to facilitate learning with critical thinking by linking prior knowledge such as other lessons, subjects, current events, or real-life examples with new information. The students were empowered to make their own decisions and question one another, as well as, encouraged to respect each other.

Another catalyst that effected change were the online pre- and post-quizzes or which were given before and at the end of the Bible study lesson. Zoom has a feature that allows participants to be assigned to different classrooms. Each week the human research subjects were placed in a different virtual classroom to take the online pre- and post-quiz. Once the assessment was administered, the human research subjects joined the other attendees in the larger classroom. This feature allowed us to keep the testing data separate from the other members. The quizzes served as a benchmark assessment to determine progress and to measure student understanding and achievement. As part of the lesson design, students received and discussed the answers to the quiz following the administration of the post-quiz. This permitted the students to get instant feedback and clarify any questions at the close of the lesson. Furthermore, as a diagnostic tool, the data from the benchmarks provided the teachers with information about which unit objectives had been mastered and which required additional instruction. The teachers were able to track progress towards the objectives. If the data showed that the class was still having

difficulty understanding a particular concept such as prevenient grace, then the subsequent lesson was tailor-made to develop the student's understanding of this concept.

In addition, the virtual online Zoom platform also facilitated change. Originally, when this process began, like the model in Acts 2:42-47 where the new converts met in houses, two different members were supposed to host Bible study groups in their homes for the members who lived in the same or nearby neighborhoods. Those who lived in Temple Hills, Maryland would gather at one member's house who lived in Temple Hills, Maryland. The members who lived in Alexandria, Virginia would meet at a member's house who lived in the Alexandria Virginia area. Unfortunately, the COVID 19 pandemic caused a turn of events. The governmental authorities implemented a "Stay At Home" orders and the venue was changed to a virtual classroom setting using the Zoom platform.

This venue effected change which offered many benefits. First and foremost, by providing a satellite Bible study, the members had access to the Bible study from anywhere, whether the members were home, at work, out of town, or even on vacation. All that is needed is a digital device and the internet. Secondly, the satellite Bible study saved the members hours (and gas) every week because the commute back and forth to the church was alleviated. Additionally, the virtual classroom attracted students from various cities, counties, and states who brought a different perspective, insights, and problem-solving techniques which broadened ones thinking and approach. Lastly, using Zoom as the venue for Bible study sharpened the members' digital skills. While increasing biblical knowledge and literacy, the members were able to hone their technology skills through online learning.

Lastly, having multiple choices for Bible study was another method to effect change. Because Wednesday night was problematic for those who were not attending Bible study, a survey was administered to the congregation to determine the best days and times for most of the members to attend. In addition to Wednesday nights, two more days and times were added to reach the masses: Tuesdays at noon and Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. This had a far-reaching affect. Not only were those who were not attending able to come, but also the members who were coming were able to switch from Wednesday nights and choose a time that best suited their schedule. Many opted for Tuesdays during their noon-day lunch hour, while others opted to change to Saturday mornings.

The main reason why this project was conducted as Bible study as opposed to a workshop, conference, or a preaching series is because the small group Bible study format allowed for active participation, accountability, and safe sanctuary. Due to this intimate setting, the participants were more willing to share personal accounts, challenges, and advice with the group. Secondly, the pastor was able to observe how those who attended Bible study regularly were growing in biblical literacy and application which facilitated spiritual maturity and discipleship formation.

Implementation

A demographic survey was administered to each of the ten participants. The survey collected the following data, gender, age, gross, income, educational attainment, local residence, membership length, religious education, frequency of reading the Bible, and preferred religious reading literature. There were nine females and one male. Within the age range, there were three between the age of twenty-one to thirty-five years old;

three between the age of thirty-six to fifty; two between the ages of fifty-one to sixty-five; and two who were sixty-six or older. The gross salary of the participants ranged from $1.00-$100,000 or more. There were two whose income ranges between $0-$20,000; three whose income range between $20,001-$40,000; one whose income is between $40,000-$70,000; three whose income ranges between $70,000-$100,00 and one whose income was $100,001 or more.

There were five participants who completed higher school and/or obtained a GED, two who obtained an associate degree or two years of college, two who obtained a bachelor's degree and one who obtained a master's degree. There were two subjects who live in Virginia; six who live in Maryland and one who live in Washington, DC. All ten of the subjects have been members of Russell Temple CME Church at least six years. There were two who have been members between six to ten years, two who have been members between eleven and twenty years, and six who have been members for twenty-one years or more.

None of the participants have attended seminary nor a Bible college. However, one attended a biblical institute or school. There were four who read the Bible zero to two times per week, and four who read the Bible three to four times per week. There was one person who read the Bible five to seven times week and the other one read the Bible seven or more times per week. When seeking preference for reading religious literature, five of the participants prefer to read the Bible while the other five prefer to read devotional material such as the Daily Bread. The next segment, Project Type, will present an overview of the Bible study lesson, a brief analysis of each lesson and a more complete analysis of the overall implementation of the Bible study.

Project Type

This research project consisted of a six-week Bible study conducted for one hour every week. There were three different Bible study times: Tuesdays at noon, Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. and Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. There was a total of ten human research subjects participating in the project: three subjects participated in the Tuesday Bible study, four participated in the Wednesday Bible study and three participated in the Saturday Bible study. However, the subjects had the option to make-up a class by attending a different class time if their personal schedule did not allow them to attend their regularly class for that week. The books were distributed to the students at the church on Saturday, September 5, 2020 from 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Those who were unable to pick up their books from the church received their book through the U. S. mail.

There were five teachers who taught the class, there were two co-teachers assigned to the Tuesday class; one teacher (the researcher) assigned to the Wednesday class and two-co-teachers assigned to the Saturday class. Each set of co-teachers met weekly to plan the lesson using a template based on the Cognitivism Theory. PowerPoints were created from the lesson plan and used as the medium for teaching the lesson. In addition, there were three people who participated as observers. The observers were asked to monitor the teachers to ensure the lesson was implemented with fidelity. A checklist was given to the observers to assess the teacher's implementation of the lesson. The observers were able to write comments on the checklist as well. However, I was also given the responsibility to observe both the teachers and the students checking for active engagement and participation among the students, as well as, listening to student

responses, questions, and feedback to determine if the students understood concepts presented in the lesson.

The Bible study series entitled, "God's Amazing Grace" was based on the scripture, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). The six-week study consisted of six Bible study narratives with an emphasis on sin, salvation, and grace, particularly prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. There were nine objectives for this series:

1. Define sin, salvation, and grace
2. Recognize and give examples of sin, salvation, and grace within the text
3. Analyze, distinguish, classify, examples prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace
4. Identify the theme (universal message) in the Bible study lessons
5. Compare, link, and apply the Bible study lessons to today's time and personal situations
6. Encourage one another in spiritual formation

The six lessons included the following topics and scriptures:

Lesson One	"When He Came to Himself"	Luke 15:11-32
Lesson Two	"A Whale of a Fish Story"	Jonah 1:1-12; 1:15-17; 2:1-10
Lesson Three	"Hanging with Jesus"	Luke 23:39-43
Lesson Four	"Rock Party"	John 7:53; 8:1-11
Lesson Five	"It's Not My Fault"	Genesis 3:1-13
Lesson Six	"Out on a Limb"	Luke 19:1-10

Cognitivism Theory Lesson Plan

Each week, the teachers constructed the lesson and PowerPoint presentation based on the Cognitivism Theory lesson template. The template consists of the following components: opening, the hook, active prior knowledge, main lesson, the graphic organizer, and closing. During the opening, the teachers are to greet the students, state the title of the lesson, offer an opening prayer, review the norms, administer the pre-quiz, and present the unit objectives.

The hook is a brief introduction designed to grab the students' attention and interest and to help focus students' thinking towards a concept or theme. The teachers can choose a prop, a piece of music, a short story or poem, a picture, a video clip, or a song. Each week the teacher is to select a hook that aligns with the lesson.

The teachers can use various strategies that aligned with the lesson to help activate prior knowledge. This helps students to construct or build connections between old and new knowledge, and concepts. Some examples include brainstorming, K-W-L chart, sharing stories, word mapping, and vocabulary building. Each week the teachers selected a strategy that aligned with the lesson.

During the main lesson, the teachers reviewed the chart, Wesley's House of Grace which is located in the student's book. Afterwards, the teachers and the students read the scriptures in segments followed by discussion questions.

The teacher and the students collaboratively completed a graphic organizer by linking the students' previous knowledge with the new knowledge to discover the meaning and associations of concepts and themes. Examples include a Research Chart, Venn Diagram, K-W-L Chart, Compare and Contrast Chart and Mapping. The closing

consisted of administering the post- quiz, reviewing the answers to the quiz, followed by offering a closing prayer.

The next section consists of the lesson plan for each week. Since the opening and closing segments are the same each week, the details for each lesson will focus on the hook, the strategy for activating prior knowledge and the choice of graphic organizer. At the conclusion of each lesson, an analysis of the lesson will be presented.

The first lesson, "When He Came to Himself," taken from Luke 15:11-32, was taught the week of September 14, 2020. Each class had a different hook for the lesson. The Tuesday Bible study group chose the song, "Runaway Child Running Wild" by the Temptations. The Wednesday class played the video song, "God's Amazing Grace" by Luther Barnes. The Saturday class played the video song, "Running Away" by Bob Marley. Regarding activating prior knowledge, the Tuesday class chose the K-W-L strategy, while the Wednesday and Saturday classes utilized the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page seven in the student book. The Tuesday and Saturday groups used the K-W-L Chart as a graphic organizer. The Wednesday class selected the Research Chart.

The students and the teachers were quite excited about the initial lesson. All the students came prepared having read the scripture lesson and completed the section, "Activate Prior Knowledge." The videos that were chosen as the "Hook" grabbed the students' attention and were relevant to theme. The teachers made sure that every person had opportunities to participate and share in the lesson. From the questions asked and the responses given by the students, it was obvious that the students were not familiar with the terms: salvation, prevenient grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. One could

tell by the facial expresses, responses and comments given that the students had difficulty identifying and distinguishing between the three types of graces in the text. The teachers reassured the students that with time, they would come to understand the terms. This reassurance caused the students to feel at ease.

Cognitivism Theory Lesson Plan

Lesson two "A Whale of a Fish Story," taken from Jonah 1:1-12; 1:15-17 and 2:1-10, was taught the week of September 21, 2020. The Tuesday and Wednesday Bible study groups chose the song, "Amazing Grace" by Aretha Franklin as the hook. The Saturday class played the video song, "The Storm is Passing Over" with the lyrics displayed. Regarding activating prior knowledge, all three classes utilized the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page thirteen in the student book. The Tuesday and Wednesday groups used the Research Chart as a graphic organizer. The Saturday class selected the Compare/Contrast Chart.

The students returned with excitement. The teachers set the tone for a positive learning environment by greeting them with warm smiles and checking on the general welfare. Again, the "hook" really grabbed the attention of the students. The students were ready to define the vocabulary words when called upon. One of the students shared a way to remember, 'prevenient grace' by focusing on the prefix 'pre' as a mnemonic device to help distinguish between the graces. Another student shared that they researched the same word and reported that John Wesley called it "preventable grace." This is evidence of students delving deeper and making connections. The teachers guided the students throughout the comprehension questions and scaffold where needed to help the students

understand. As the students worked through the graphic organizers, you saw evidence that they were beginning to understand the concepts presented in the lesson.

Cognitivism Theory Lesson Plan

The third lesson, "Hanging with Jesus" was taken from Luke 23:39-43. It was taught the week of September 28, 2020. The Tuesday class showed the video, "Sanctifying Grace" as the hook. The Wednesday class showed a crucifixion video clip entitled, "The Thief on the Cross. The Saturday class played the video song, "Remember Me." With regards to activating prior knowledge, the Tuesday and the Wednesday classes selected the K-W-L Chart, while the Saturday class selected the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page eighteen in the student book. The Tuesday and Wednesday groups completed the K-W-L Chart as a graphic organizer. The Saturday class selected the Compare/Contrast Chart.

By this time, the students were building a rapport with one another. They often made encouraging comments to one another or would ask their classmates to unpack an answer. It was evident that they had read the lesson because they readily volunteered to answer questions. In addition, their responses to questions were quite accurate; they were able to provide evidence from the text to support their answers. They were also able to show relevancy with themselves and/or current events. An additional chart was shared with the class to help bring further understanding to the three types of grace. Students were able to recognize justifying grace in the text, but still had trouble recognizing prevenient and sanctifying grace. However, when the teachers directed the students to

look at the new chart, the students were able then to identify context clues from the text to help them distinguish prevenient and sanctifying grace.

Lesson four "Rock Party," taken from John 7:53-8:11 was taught the week of October 5, 2020. The Tuesday class chose to show the video song, "Please Be Patient with Me, God is Not through with Me Yet" as the hook. The Wednesday class showed a video clip entitled, "Woman Caught in Adultery." The Saturday class played a different video with a similar title, "A Woman Caught in Adultery." With reference to activating prior knowledge, all three classes selected the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page twenty-three in the student book. The Tuesday class completed the K-W-L Chart as a graphic organizer. The Wednesday class had the students complete the Research Chart while the Saturday class had the students complete the Compare/Contrast Chart.

This lesson provided a lively, jovial discussion especially between the men and women. The students were able to compare the woman in the text with the #MeToo Movement and the Woman's Liberation Movement. The students were becoming more familiar with the terms and were able to identify and distinguish between prevenient and justifying grace. However, some students had difficulty finding sanctifying grace in the text. The teachers were able to scaffold the students' learning by providing more questions. Afterwards, most were able to discover the example of sanctifying grace in the text. Interestingly, the other students were beginning to help the other students to see context clues in the text that supported answers to questions. Also, students were able to connect the text to text, text to self, and text to the world. By this lesson, the students were no longer anxious to take the pre- and post-quiz, but rather saw it as a way to evaluate their growth and to determine the strengths and weaknesses.

Cognitivism Theory Lesson Plan

Lesson five "It's Not My Fault," taken from Genesis 3:1-13, was taught the week of October 12, 2020. The Tuesday and Wednesday classes chose to the video song, "Yield Not to Temptation" as the hook. The Saturday class played a video clip entitled, "The Fall of Man: Adam and Eve." With regards to activating prior knowledge, all three classes selected the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page twenty-eight in the student book. The Tuesday and Wednesday classes completed the Mapping graphic organizer. The Saturday class had the students complete the Compare/Contrast Chart.

Interestingly, everybody was able to see themselves in the text and named a specific incident where they did not want to take responsibility for their wrongdoing. It was evident that the students were familiar with the structure of the lesson. The students felt comfortable and there was an increased dialogue among students. They had also reached a comfort level where they began to challenge one another in a non-threatening way. The students often supported their viewpoint using evidence from the text. The students were able to easily identify the various sins committed in the narrative. One student expressed how it is so easy to fall prey to the tempter's snare.

Cognitivism Theory Lesson Plan

The final lesson entitled, "Out on a Limb," was taken from Luke 19:1-10. This lesson was taught the week of October 19, 2020. The Tuesday and Wednesday classes chose to watch the video, "Sanctifying Grace" as the hook. The Saturday class played the video song, "Just Like Zacchaeus." With reference to activating prior knowledge, all

three classes selected the Vocabulary Building strategy found on page 33 in the student book. The Tuesday class chose the Venn Diagram as a graphic organizer. The Wednesday class selected the Research Chart, and the Saturday class had the students complete the Compare/Contrast Chart.

This lesson was a great way to end the six-weeks. By the end of the lesson, the students were recognizing prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace with ease. They were able to see similarities as they compared their lives to Zacchaeus and to the people in the crowd. They were also able to identify examples of sin, salvation, and grace. The students were able to compare this text to text, text to self, and text to the world. Since the students had come fully prepared, they were totally engrossed in the lesson. They did not want this Bible study to end. As a matter of fact, all three classes asked if I would create another Bible study series entitled, "God's Amazing Grace: Part 2".

Summary of Learning

Based on the empirical data examined, the project presents supporting evidence for effective measures of biblical literacy and discipleship formation. There were eleven participants who took the pre-assessment. However, there were ten participants who took the post-assessment. The results show the percentage of participants who had correct answers for each question.

	Questions	**Percent Correct**	**Percent Correct**
1.	Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?	55%	100%
2.	In the Book of Luke, the entire fifteenth chapter is sometimes called?	45%	80%
3.	What does the word 'prodigal' mean in the story of the prodigal son?	1%	60%

4.	In the story of the prodigal son, which type of grace is exhibited when the younger son "came to himself"?	18%	90%
5.	Who wrote the Gospel of John?	55%	90%
6.	The woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by which group?	18%	80%
7.	In the story about the woman caught in adultery, Jesus wrote ____?	72%	100%
8.	In the story of the woman caught in adultery, which type of grace is exhibited when Jesus tells the woman, "God and sin no more."?	55%	50%
9.	Which type of grace is display in the story when Jesus says, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"?	18%	30%
10.	The actual story about "Jonah and the Fish (whale)" is found in which testament?	82%	80%
11.	Which city did God tell Jonah to go to and warn the people of His wrath?	72%	100%
12.	How many days and nights did Jonah stay in the belly of the fish (whale)?	72%	100%
13.	Which divine grace goes before us to help us recognize that we need to repent and make a change?	45%	90%
14.	Which divine grace cancels our guilt, forgive us of our mistakes, and empowers us to resist the power of sin?	55%	80%
15.	Which divine grace helps us to live a life of holiness with God, self. and community?	72%	100%
16.	How many books are in the Old Testament?	55%	70%
17.	What is sin?	82%	80%
18.	Which divine grace transforms people to live a life of holiness in harmony with God, self, and community?	63%	90%
19.	Which word means "the saving of the soul from sin and its consequences"?	100%	100%
20.	How many thieves were crucified with Jesus?	63%	70%

What does the data reveal? The expectation was that through exposure to and an understanding of God's Word, the members of Russell Temple CME Church would grow in their biblical knowledge which would foster spiritual maturity and discipleship formation. Two instruments were used to measure the effectiveness of this biblical education model. The first instrument administered at the beginning and end of the six-week Bible study was the Biblical Literacy Assessment. The second instrument was a

quiz that was administered before the Bible study lesson and again at the end of the lesson to measure weekly progress.

Based on the empirical data examined, the project offers supportive evidence for effective measure of aspects of discipleship formation. All the questions except for numbers eight, seventeen and nineteen show improvement. Numbers eight and seventeen show a decrease in the percentage correct while number nineteen shows no improvement because all the participants answered correctly on both the pre- and post-assessment. There was marked improvement for questions three, four, and six. As the participants grew in the understanding of the concepts, salvation, sin, and grace, they were able to identify instances of these concepts in the lesson and then were able to transfer this understanding to their daily lives.

In addition to their improved test scores, and a better understanding of the concepts, the teachers and observers noticed discipleship formation when participants shared personal accounts on how they leveraged the biblical teachings to become more Christlike. This quantitative data disclosed evidence of spiritual growth in fellowshipping with believers. The students were able to forgive when a person's actions or words were harmful. They sought to live in harmony with others. For example, one participant shared this example with the class, "I was really upset with the way my co-worker talked to me. But I remembered the Bible study lesson and decided I wanted to remain "in the house," so I chose to pray about it rather than angrily confront them." This demonstration of sanctifying grace showed that the student was seeking to live in harmony with God, self and community. The increased biblical literacy of the participants prompted them to

implement more discipline in their lives as they reconciled relationships and resolved conflicts more peaceably based on the principles taught in the small group lessons.

In addition, the feedback from and observations of the students disclosed that the students had begun to witness to the world. They often demonstrated their understanding of the Bible study concepts to co-workers, family members, and friends as they shared testimonies, or biblical truths when God provided opportunities. The students engaged in regular study and prayer time and came to Bible study well prepared. Also, the students shared personal situations where they were beginning to seek Christ's guidance when making choices. The Bible became a guide for the way to think or act. This evidence is significant because it demonstrates spiritual maturity in using the Bible as a moral compass and for the purpose of discovering truth for daily living.

Additionally, a post interview session was done after the completion of the Bible study series. While the pre- and post- Biblical Literacy Assessment showed marked improvement in biblical literacy, another instrument was needed to disclose if the students were nurtured in their faith formation. This interview was found to unearth more detailed information and a more accurate assessment of the participants discipleship formation. A PowerPoint presentation was used to present the questions. The following are notes taken from the group interview, refined by reviewing the videotape of the session. The data constitutes a listing of the questions and the summary of the findings.

Post Interview Questions

1. Based on your experience, talk about any impact the Bible study, God's Amazing Grace," has had on you such as your worship life, your prayer life,

reading God's word, navigating through personal problems, accepting new assignments, etc. Give two examples.

The Bible study had an impact on participants worship life. Participants are attending more services, such as revivals, church school, workshops, and Bible study. For others, the Bible study has caused them to feel excited about coming to Bible study. The Bible study had an impact on how participants apply and live the Word of God. Participants can see how the different examples within Bible study correlate with one's personal life and current situations. Participants are using the Word of God to navigate through personal problems. Others are reading the Word several times to get a better understanding, while others are researching key words, as well as, reading the previous chapter to get a better understanding of the lesson. Some are learning to think first before reacting. The Bible study has also helped some to have better relationship others.

The Bible study also had an impact on the participants prayer life. Some are praying more while others have grown in the faith to trust God for answers to personal requests such as a new job. Then there are those who are praying the scriptures during personal and public prayer time. Some participants felt the structure or layout of the Bible study helped them to become better organized. Participants are becoming more familiar with the concepts of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace and are able to identify and recognize these forms of grace more readily while reading the scripture and in their daily living.

2. As a result of participating in the Bible study, do you feel comfortable discussing or sharing God's word with other people? If so, how has the Bible

study made you comfortable enough to discuss or tell others about God's word? Provide an example.

The participants can use the scriptures to help co-workers with personal problems. Also, the participants feel knowledgeable of God's word and can share this knowledge with others including those of a different religion. In addition, participants feel comfortable sharing God's Word with their neighbors, co-workers, and family members. Moreover, participants can testify how God's Word was instrumental in their transformational process. Some participants are able to share God's Word but are also comfortable with not having all the answers. Still other participants can share, discuss, and pray using a particular Bible study passage or verse from a previous discussed Bible study lesson.

3. How do you define grace? Why is this spiritual concept so essential to faith formation?

The participants understand the following about grace: grace is not earned or purchased; it is free and a gift from God. There are three types of grace: prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. God sends His prevenient grace ahead to help believers make the right choice. Prevenient grace causes us to turn around from behaviors that we are doing. It points you in the right direction. Grace helps you open the door when Christ is standing at the door knocking. Prevenient grace is essential because it helps people to choose God. Grace is essential because it helps one to see where he or she missed the mark.

Justifying grace is the grace that pardons the believer from their sins. Justifying grace forgives us when we do what we should not be doing. Justifying grace is when you make a turn towards the Lord; you have that awareness that you need forgiveness.

Justifying grace helps you to realize that your sins are being cancelled. Justifying grace enables us to have a closer walk with Jesus. Grace helps us to gain trust and belief in God. Throughout the Bible you see numerous accounts of how God's grace is so important. God sent His prevenient grace to help direct the characters in the Bible to the porch. As the stories of grace unfold, you can relate the stories to personal situations and to current events. Grace is essential because it shows you how much God loves us. Repeatedly, God gives His children chance after chance – prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace. Grace is essential because as God extends His grace towards us, we as believers should extend the same grace to others.

Sanctifying grace is where the change happens; it is when we have a real relationship with God. Sanctifying grace restores people to live in harmony within the community such as the woman at the well, Jonah and the fish, and Paul on Damascus Road. Sanctifying grace is essential because as God extends His grace towards us, we as believers should extend the same grace towards others. Sanctifying is essential to faith formation, because there are so many people who think that God does not love them. When we demonstrate God's grace to others it will helps them to receive God's love and God's grace.

4. How has learning about and understanding sin, salvation, and grade made a difference in your spiritual walk?

The participants believe that sin is always going to be there; however, God's grace is there to help us. When we sin, God will forgive us. The participants understand that salvation is defined as redemption, liberation, freedom, and deliverance. When you

understand salvation, you no longer have to feel guilty or be in bondage and downtrodden. Justifying grace helps the believer to understand that one can ask for forgiveness and be free from the guilt and shame. The participants also believed that one should not take advantage of God's grace and continue to do the same sins repeatedly without really trying to make a difference. This is cheap grace. The participants believe that all three are intertwined. The three forms of grace are always pushing believers away from sin towards salvation. Grace is necessary to receive salvation.

5. As a result of participating in Bible study, do you feel you are on the porch, in the doorway, or moving into the House of Grace? Explain your answer.

Some of the participants felt they were on the porch but working towards the doorway. Others felt they were in the doorway, while others felt they had moved into the house. There were others who felt depending on the situation they may encounter, they may navigate from the house to the doorway, to the porch and then back to the doorway and then enter the house again.

6. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

All the participants are looking forward to the next Bible study series. All the participants enjoyed the series and are looking for more. The participants liked having three different classes on three different days and times. This gave them the flexibility to choose a different day and time if a personal scheduling conflict arose. Additionally, the participants enjoyed the small group setting. The small group setting provided an intimate atmosphere which allowed the attendees to feel comfortable with each other. The

participants also liked having intergenerational small groups. The varied experiences and diverse backgrounds of each person broadened everyone's perspective and viewpoint.

The data shows that the students not only increased in biblical knowledge, but also the students were able to understand the knowledge, articulate their understanding as well as provide examples as to how the knowledge has nurtured their faith formation. The students were able to share how the Bible study impacted their faith formation. All of the participants now understand how grace is essential to salvation and living a life of holiness. The participants can identify examples of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace in varied settings whether they are listening to a sermon, participating in church school, or helping someone. The participants are self-evaluating and self-monitoring regarding John Wesley's House of Grace. Moreover, they are feeling more comfortable with holding each other accountable while providing the grace that is needed to nurture one's discipleship formation. Because the members participated in Bible study, they learned how certain spiritual concepts nurtured their faith formation.

John Wesley's, use of small groups, created an environment exemplified by grace, truth, and simplicity so that the members would discover the group as a safe place to share their lives and observe Christlike love and relationships. In Alice O'Neal's thesis, "Christian Education: Eight Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness," she defines the terms disciple and discipleship as "an individual (disciple) who has made a decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ and is engaged in an

ongoing process (discipleship) to learn how to be His followers."[7] Therefore, the results are relevant to the research topic and provides support for the hypothesis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this Doctor of Ministry project, "Developing a Ministry Model of Biblical Education Through Small Groups," sought to offer opportunities for discipleship formation with an intentional plan for increased biblical knowledge and spiritual growth through small Bible study groups. The problem present in the context is that the members do not understand how the spiritual concepts of sin, salvation, and grace are essential to discipleship formation. The research approach included an examination of John Wesley's class meetings as a paradigm. In using John Wesley's small group model for discipleship formation, the project sought to support the hypothesis that if the participants develop an understanding of sin, salvation, and grace through a six-week Bible study, then they would grow in biblical literacy which will foster discipleship formation.

So, a question arises, was the hypothesis supported or negated? Yes, the hypothesis was supported. The project was a success on so many levels. First, the results from the pre- Biblical Literacy Assessment compared to the post Biblical Literacy Assessment revealed growth on seventeen out of twenty questions. Of the three remaining questions, one question showed no change or growth because all the participants answered correctly on both the pre- and post-assessment. Moreover, as one watched and listened to the responses to questions from the participants during the

[7] Alice T. O'Neal, "Christian Education: Eight Essential Elements to Foster Spiritual Formation and Christlikeness" (DMin diss., Liberty University School of Divinity, 2020), 7, https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3419&context=doctoral.

weekly Bible study lessons, the qualitative data unveiled that the participants were analyzing, questioning, clarifying, and comparing text to text, text to self and text to the world; thus, connecting the Bible study lessons to other themes, characters, or narratives in the Bible, to personal situations, and to today's times and current events. Furthermore, the members were able to recognize, define and give examples of sin, salvation, and grace within the text, as well as distinguish, and classify examples of prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace in greater context. For example, the participants were able to transfer the vocabulary and concepts learned in Bible study to social media, church school discussions, chat responses on Zoom during Sunday worship service, and conversations among family members, friends, and other church members.

The small group format facilitated community and safe sanctuary. This positive, nurturing environment enabled the students to trust others, feel a sense of belonging, ask questions, and engage in discussions. Because the members participated in Bible study, they learned how certain spiritual concepts nurtured their faith formation. Consequently, the participants were willing to share anecdotal stories and personal testimonies which aided in spiritual growth. As they grew in biblical truth, their lives were being transformed and equipped to reach others for Christ. As a result, the participants began sharing the lessons with and inviting family members, friends, and co-workers to attend Bible study. Therefore, the data disclosed that as the students' lives were changed, they reflected a passion to share Christ with others.

There were several things that went well in the research project. The human research subjects or students were profoundly serious and committed to the research project. They attended class regularly and came prepared with the homework assignments

completed before class began. Secondly, the students liked having the option of switching class to another day if their personal schedule did not allow them to attend their regularly scheduled Bible study class. Thirdly, both the teachers and the students found the Teachers' Guide and Student Book (respectively) beneficial. They liked the layout of the book as well as having all the lessons compiled into one big book. In addition, the Cognitive Theory model worked very well. The teachers were able to collaborate, plan and use the lesson plan template to design innovative and interactive PowerPoint presentations. Lastly, the implementation of classroom norms really set the tone and created an atmosphere conducive for learning.

There were also challenges that were presented during the research project. Of course, technology always present challenges. In the beginning, some of the participants did not know how to navigate using Zoom. The participants were challenge with doing things like how to mute or unmute or how to turn the video camera off and on. However, with time, the participants became more acclimated to Zoom. Then, there were times when participants had difficulty with internet connections. Sometimes the participants had trouble connecting and other times the band width was too low which made it difficult to hear or understand the responses. There was also a challenge with one or two participants attending class on time. Occasionally, it was an internet problem, other times it was a personal scheduling problem which caused the participant to miss the administration of the pre-quiz. In addition, the Bible study time ran longer than sixty minutes partly due to the additional time it took to administer the pre- and post-quiz (which were not accounted for in the initial planning) as well as, the participants totally becoming engrossed in the lesson and not wanting to stop.

As a result of the challenges, there are several changes I would implement to enhance this project for the future. I would hold a Zoom workshop prior to the project. Secondly, now that I am more informed about internet connection and band width, I would also help the members to understand how to secure a stronger internet connection. Additionally, I would add fifteen more minutes to the Bible study lesson to accommodate for the pre- and post-quiz. The participants liked having the pre- and post-quiz as part of the lesson. It was an incentive for them to complete their homework assignments, read the lesson ahead of time and pay attention so they could improve their scores on the post-quiz.

After the completion of the project, I asked this question to the Bible study attendees, "Where do I go from here?" The participants readily and happily shared their responses. First, they wanted me to create a "God's Amazing Grace Part Two" book. "We want more!" they exclaimed. So, I designed a Part Two book, which included prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace; but in addition, I included cheap grace (Dietrich Bonhoeffer), repentance versus forgiveness, and the sufficiency of God's grace to increase their biblical literacy and depth of knowledge. Secondly, the students wanted to keep all three Bible study days and times. Interestingly, two of the teachers wanted to continue teaching on Tuesdays and one of the participants from the Tuesday class volunteered to teach class on Tuesdays as well. In addition, a student from the Wednesday class volunteered to be a substitute teacher for the Saturday class. Thirdly, the superintendent of church school, who was impressed with the Cognitive Theory Model, asked if I would conduct a training workshop for all the current and potential church schoolteachers. Lastly, it was suggested to share this project with both my

presiding elder and my bishop in hopes of sharing this project with the Washington-Virginia District and the New York-Washington Conference, respectfully. The members felt this Bible study was transformational and wanted others to benefit and grow in the knowledge of the Lord.

In addition, to doing presentations for the district and the conference, I would like to publish the Bible study student books and teacher's guides (Part One and Part Two) as well as do Book Talks so I can share how to implement this model effectively. Perhaps, I would like to serve as a mentor for United Theological Seminary. I would love to further develop and share this ministry model for facilitating discipleship formation. When Jesus commissioned us to make disciples, He also told us teach them to observe all that He commands us (Matt. 28:20). Too often, pastors focus on getting people through the door of salvation but leave the new converts standing alone on the threshold. However, there is more; the gift of salvation is not all that God intended for everyone to receive. God wants His people to continually grow in the knowledge of who He is by studying His word. After accepting Christ as Savior, new believers need someone to teach them the truth of scriptures and the ways of God. The Bible says, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3-4) KJV. Thus, it is the Lord's desire for His people to grow in the knowledge of the truth. As we grow in God's word, He transforms our character, attitudes, and behavior so we will resemble the ways of the Lord and impact our families, friends, and non-believers. This is what discipleship formation is all about.

APPENDIX A

THE BIBLE STUDY FLYER

Russell Temple CME Church

Rev. Michele F. Parker, Pastor

Coming Soon!

Join us for our next Bible Study series via Zoom:

"God's Amazing Grace"

Fall Series: September – October 2020

NOTE: There will be multiple Zoom Bible Study classes.
Choose one that is convenient for you.
Tuesdays at noon ◊ Wednesdays at 7:00 PM ◊ Saturdays at 10:00 AM

Contact Sis. Kimberly Carter or Sis. Johnna Hardy to sign-up for the class.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves,
it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast."
Ephesians 2:8-9

APPENDIX B

HUMAN CONSENT FORM

united Theological Seminary www.united.edu
4501 Denlinger Road • Dayton, Ohio 45426 • p: 937.529.2201

Human Research Subject Consent Form

Project Title: Developing a Ministry Model for Biblical Education Through Small Groups

Project Director: Reverend Michele F. Parker

Institution: United Theological Seminary

Name of participant:

_____
Please print first & last name

Please read and initial each section below.
Your initials indicate you have read and understand each section.

The Research Project

_____ This project addresses an educational plan for developing disciples through the ministry of satellite Bible Study small groups for the members of Russell Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. The research question is: If the members of Russell Temple CME Church engage in satellite Bible Study small groups for six weeks, will their understanding of the Bible facilitate discipleship formation?

Expectations of the Human Research Subject

_____ After my consent to participate in the study, I will complete a Biblical Literacy Pre-Assessment that will provide initial input for the project. Each week, I will attend the satellite Bible Study small groups, complete the weekly pre- and post- quizzes, participate in group discussions, and complete the homework assignments. Lastly, I will complete a Biblical Literacy Post Assessment that will provide data for the project.

Consent

_____ I agree to participate in this project as a human research subject. I understand that at any point in this project I can withdraw my participation without explanation. I understand that if I elect to withdraw my participation it will have no effect on my membership at Russell Temple CME Church. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation as a human research subject for this project.

Confidentiality

_____ I understand that this consent form, the covenant, the pre and post Biblical Literacy Assessment and other collected data will be maintained and stored in strict compliance with privacy in Reverend Parker's file cabinet in her home office, located in Alexandria, Virginia. All electronic data will be deleted, and all paper data collected will be shredded after the final examination of the dissertation.

Risks for Human Research Subjects

_____ I do not foresee any risks in taking part of this research. I understand that my responses will be covered in anonymity and no one will be able to deduce from my responses my exact identity. If the project director choses to use quotes from my feedback, it will be anonymous. My contributions to the study will be safeguarded from public view for the duration of the study.

Benefits of the Study

_____ I understand that the benefits of participating in this research would be to develop a better understanding and deeper relationship with Jesus and His Church. Also, the members of the groups will have opportunities each week to build relationships and nurture one another in the faith.

_____ I offer my participation voluntarily and without coercion.

If you have any questions: Please contact Reverend Parker directly at: 434.579.5794.

I agree that by signing this consent form, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree with the terms as a human research subject. Even though this consent form bears my signature, I understand I have the right to withdraw entirely without explanation and at any time.

_____ _____

Human Subject Research Signature Date

_____ _____

Project Director Signature Date

APPENDIX C

SATELLITE BIBLE STUDY COVENANT

Russell Temple CME Church
507 North Alfred Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
Reverend Michele F. Parker, Pastor

"Developing and Multiplying Disciples to Advance the Kingdom of God"
GATHER ◊ GROW ◊ GIVE ◊ GO

Satellite Bible Study Covenant

Purpose: The purpose of the satellite Bible Study at Russell Temple CME Church is to facilitate and undergird discipleship formation of the members through a six-week study of God's Word.

Essential Bible Study Information

- We will meet every _____(day of the week) for six weeks from _____ to _____(time).
- Members are asked to arrive at least five minutes before so Bible Study can begin on time.
- We will meet via Zoom.

Satellite Bible Study Covenant:

- We agree to attend the Bible Study sessions for six weeks as faithfully as possible making it a priority.
- We agree to be on time to respect others.
- We agree to come to Bible Study prepared and the assignments completed.
- We agree to participate in group while being careful not to dominate the groups discussions.
- We always agree to treat one another with respect, especially in times of disagreement or conflict.
- We agree to keep things said in the group confidential.

Signature Date

APPENDIX D

BIBLICAL LITERACY ASSESSMENT PRE AND POST

Biblical Literacy Assessment
(Pre & Post)

Our new Bible Study series is entitled, "God's Amazing Grace. As we read and discuss the stories in the Bible, we will learn about God's grace. However, before we begin the new Bible Study series, let us see how much you already know about the stories we will study. Then after we finish the series, we will take the same assessment again to see how much you have learned.

1. **Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?**
- Moses
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke

2. **In the Book of Luke, the entire fifteenth chapter is sometimes called?**
- The Lost Chapter
- The Last Chapter
- The Love Chapter
- The Prodigal Chapter

3. **What does the word, *prodigal* mean?**
- Lazy
- Runaway
- Wasteful
- Bad

4. **In the story of the Prodigal Son, which type of grace is exhibited when the younger son "came to himself"?**
- Sanctifying
- Justifying
- Prevenient
- None of the above

5. **Who wrote the Gospel of John?**
- Paul
- Matthew
- Mark
- John

6. **The woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by which group?**
- The scribes and Pharisees
- The disciples of Jesus
- Paul and Silas
- The townspeople

7. **In the story about the woman caught in adultery, Jesus wrote ____?**
- In the Air
- On a rock
- On the ground
- On a piece of papyrus

8. **In the story of the woman caught in adultery, which type of grace is exhibited when Jesus tells the woman, "Go and sin no more."?**
- Sanctifying Grace
- Justifying Grace
- Prevenient Grace
- None of the above

9. **Which type of grace is display in the story when Jesus says, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"?**
- Sanctifying Grace
- Justifying Grace
- Prevenient Grace
- None of the above

10. **The actual story about "Jonah and the Fish (whale)" is found in which testament?**
- Old Testament
- New Testament

11. **Which city did God tell Jonah to go to and warn the people of His wrath?**
- Nineveh
- Babel
- The City of Peace
- Galilee

12. **How many days and nights did Jonah stay in the belly of the fish (whale)?**
- 40
- 3
- 1
- 5

13. **Which divine grace goes <u>before</u> us to help us recognize that we need to repent and make a change?**
- Prevenient
- Justifying
- Sanctifying

14. Which divine grace cancels our guilt, <u>forgives</u> us of our mistakes, and empowers us to resist the power of sin?

- Prevenient
- Justifying
- Sanctifying

15. Which divine grace helps us to live a life of <u>holiness</u> with God, self. and community?

- Prevenient
- Justifying
- Sanctifying

16. How many books are in the <u>Old</u> Testament?

- 10
- 27
- 39
- 66

17. What is sin?

- Transgression against God's law
- The breaking of God's moral law
- Corruption of what is good
- All the above

18. Which divine grace transforms people to live a life of holiness in harmony with God, self, and community?

- Justifying
- Sanctifying
- Prevenient

19. **Which word means "the saving of the soul from sin and its consequences**"?

- Sin
- Salvation
- Faith
- Hope

20. **How many thieves were crucified with Jesus?**

- 3
- 1
- 2
- None of the above

APPENDIX E

PRE AND POST QUIZ

Lesson One – Pre & Post Quiz

1. **Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?**
   - Moses
   - Matthew
   - Mark
   - Luke

2. **In the Gospel of Luke, the entire fifteenth chapter is sometimes called?**
   - The Lost Chapter
   - The Last Chapter
   - The Love Chapter
   - The Prodigal Chapter

3. **What does the word "prodigal" mean in the story of The Prodigal Son?**
   - Lazy
   - Runaway
   - Wasteful
   - Hungry

4. **In the story of the Prodigal Son, which type of grace is exhibited when the younger son "came to himself"?**
   - Sanctifying
   - Justifying
   - Prevenient
   - None of the above

5. **How many books are in the Old Testament?**
   - 66
   - 27
   - 39
   - 10

Lesson Two – Pre & Post Quiz

1. **The actual story about "Jonah and the Fish (whale)" is found in which testament?**
   - Old Testament
   - New Testament

2. **Which city did God tell Jonah to go to and warn the people of His wrath?**
   - Nineveh
   - Babel
   - The City of Peace
   - Galilee

3. **How many days and nights did Jonah stay in the belly of the fish (whale)?**
   - 40
   - 3
   - 1
   - 5

4. **Which divine grace goes <u>before</u> us to help us recognize that we need to repent and make a change?**
   - Prevenient
   - Justifying
   - Sanctifying

5. **How many books are in the New Testament?**
   - 66
   - 27
   - 39
   - 10

Lesson Three - Pre & Post Quiz

1. **The narrative about the crucifixions of Jesus and the thieves is found in which testament?**
   - Old Testament
   - New Testament

2. **Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?**
   - Mark
   - Peter
   - Paul
   - Luke

3. **How many thieves were crucified with Jesus?**
   - 3
   - 1
   - 2

4. **Which divine grace cancels our guilt, <u>forgives</u> us of our mistakes, and empowers us to resist the power of sin?**
   - Prevenient
   - Justifying
   - Sanctifying

5. **Which divine grace helps us to live a life of <u>holiness</u> with God, self. and community?**
   - Prevenient
   - Justifying
   - Sanctifying

Lesson Four - Pre & Post Quiz

1. **Who wrote the Gospel of John?**
   - Paul
   - Matthew
   - John
   - Luke

2. **The woman caught in adultery was brought to Jesus by which group?**
   - The scribes and Pharisees
   - The disciples of Jesus
   - Paul and Silas
   - The townspeople

3. **In the story about the woman caught in adultery, Jesus wrote ____?**
   - In the Air
   - On a rock
   - On the ground
   - On a piece of papyrus

4. **In the story of the woman caught in adultery, which type of grace is exhibited when Jesus tells the woman "Go and sin no more"?**
   - Sanctifying Grace
   - Justifying Grace
   - Prevenient Grace
   - None of the above

5. **Which type of grace is display in the story when Jesus says, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!"?**
   - Sanctifying Grace
   - Justifying Grace
   - Prevenient Grace
   - None of the above

Lesson Five - Pre & Post Quiz

1. **The actual story about the fall of Adam and Eve is found in which testament?**
   - Old Testament
   - New Testament

2. **Which animal deceived Adam and Eve?**
   - Tiger
   - Monkey
   - Serpent
   - Bird

3. **Which fruit does the scripture say that Adam and Eve ate?**
   - apple
   - fig
   - pear
   - None of the above

4. **Which divine grace transforms people to live a life of holiness in harmony with God, self, and community?**
   - Justifying
   - Sanctifying
   - Prevenient

5. **What is sin?**
   - Transgression against God's law
   - The breaking of God's moral law
   - Corruption of what is good
   - All the above

Lesson Six - Pre & Post Quiz

1. **The actual story about the Zacchaeus climbing the sycamore tree is found in which testament?**
   - Old Testament
   - New Testament

2. **What was Zacchaeus profession?**
   - doctor
   - lawyer
   - tax collector
   - judge

3. **Who came to visit Zacchaeus' house?**
   - Abraham
   - The Pharisees
   - The townspeople
   - Jesus

4. **Which divine grace transforms people to live a life of holiness in harmony with God, self, and community?**
   - Justifying
   - Sanctifying
   - Prevenient

5. **What is salvation?**
   - To be saved from one's sins
   - To be liberated from sin and its consequences
   - To be delivered or redeemed
   - All the above

APPENDIX F

OBSERVER'S CHECKLIST

Observer's Checklist

Date_____
Title of the Lesson_____
Teachers' Names _____
Observer's Name _____

Observation:	**Yes**	**No**	**Not Applicable**	**Notes**
Did the teacher start the lesson on time?				
Did the teacher establish/review the classroom norms?				
Did the teacher review the Unit Objectives?				
Did the teacher use a hook to grab the students' attention?				
Did the teacher attempt to activate the students' prior knowledge?				
Did the teacher use any teaching aids?				
Was the teacher well organized?				
Did the teacher focus on Prevenient Grace?				
Did the teacher focus on Justifying Grace				
Did the teacher focus on Sanctifying Grace?				
Did the teacher review the Unit Objectives at the end of the lesson?				
Did the teacher end the lesson on time?				

Comments_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX G

POST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Post Interview Questions

1. Based on your experience, talk about any impact the Bible study, God's Amazing Grace," has had on you such as your worship life, your prayer life, reading God's word, navigating through personal problems, accepting new assignments, etc. Give two examples.
2. As a result of participating in the Bible study, do you feel comfortable discussing or sharing God's word with other people? If so, how has the Bible study made you comfortable enough to discuss or tell others about God's word? Provide an example.
3. How do you define grace? Why is this spiritual concept so essential to faith formation?
4. How has learning about and understanding sin, salvation, and grade made a difference in your spiritual walk?
5. As a result of participating in Bible study, do you feel you are on the porch, in the doorway, or moving into the House of Grace? Explain your answer.
6. Is there anything else you would like to add or say?

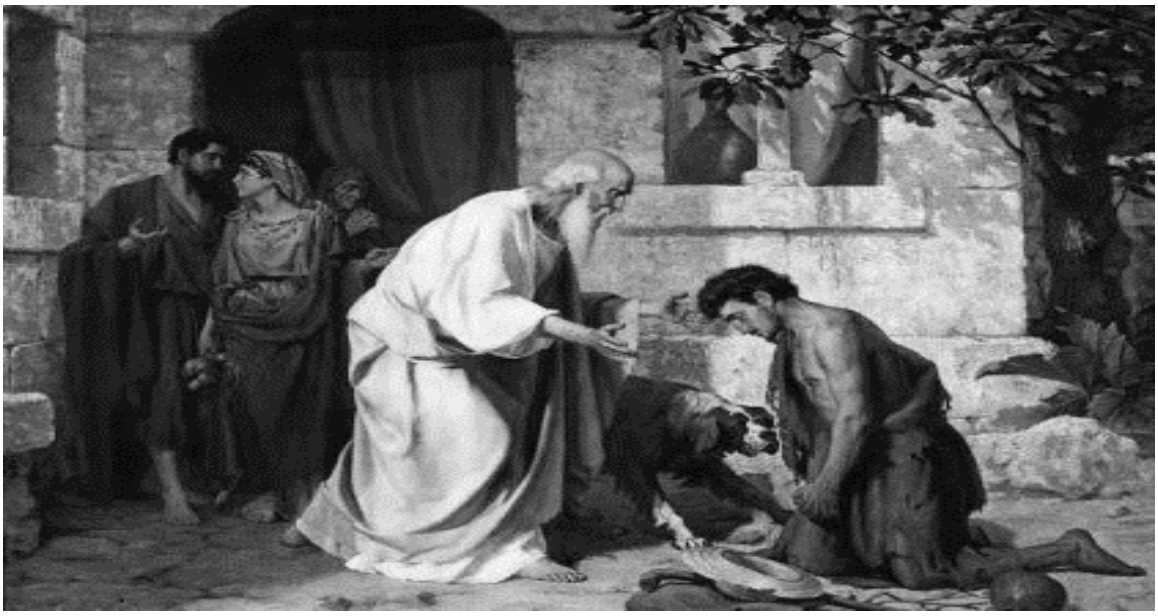
APPENDIX H

LESSONS

Week of September 14, 2020 –

Lesson One

"When He Came to Himself"
(Luke 15:11-32)



Prevenient Grace

Justifying Grace

Sanctifying Grace

"When He Came to Himself"

Luke 15:11-32

Activate Prior Knowledge

What do you know about . . .?

The Gospel of Luke

_____

_____

The customs of Jewish fathers and their sons concerning property and possessions?

_____

_____

The father?

_____

_____

The younger son?

_____

_____

Grace?

_____

_____

Sin?

_____

_____

Salvation?

_____

_____

Main Lesson
God's House of Grace

The Porch – Prevenient Grace

God's prevenient grace is the grace that goes before us that keeps us from moving farther away from God. "Prevenient grace wakes us up and causes us to realize we need to be saved. It brings us to repentance."[1] God desires that we recognize both our sinful state and His offer of salvation. Thus, prevenient grace is essential because it brings us to the porch of God's House where we become cognizant of the need to repent, return home to the Father, and begin to seek God's amazing grace.[2]

Entering God's House – Justifying Grace

Once a person returns home to the Father and steps on the porch of God's House, the justifying grace of God works to get the person to enter the front door of God's House. Justifying grace is that grace, offered by God to all people, through which God pardons the believer of sin. According to the *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English,* justification is the theological term for the forgiveness of sins through Jesus.[3] Hence, this justifying grace cancels our guilt and empowers us to resist the power of sin and to fully love God and neighbor. The former way of life is gone, and the person is transformed into a new life in Christ.[4]

Moving into God's House – Sanctifying Grace

Sanctification is the theological term that refers to holiness or becoming Christlike.[5] Thus, once a person enters God's house, sanctifying grace or holiness invites the person to move completely in and take up residence in God's House.[6] Prevenient and justifying grace enables you to *become* a Christian, but it is sanctifying grace which enables you to *be* a Christian. Sanctifying grace works to transform people into people who live in community harmoniously with God, self, and neighbor.

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[1] Kevin M. Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship: Wesley's General Rules as a Guide for Christian Living* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2009), 33.

[2] Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience* (Franklin, TN: Seedbed Publishing, 2014), 40-41.

[3] Debbie Dodd, *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English: A Resource for English Language Learners* (Portland, OR: Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1990), 85.

[4] Watson, *A Blueprint for Discipleship,* 33.

[5] Dodd, *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English,* 135.

[6] Watson, *The Class Meeting,* 46.

Main Lesson

When He Came into His Finances (Verses 11-12)
11 Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So, he divided his property between them.

Discussion Questions

*Who wrote the Gospel of Luke?
The younger son wanted the father to give him his property. Why do you think the younger son wanted to leave home? Was it wrong for the younger son to ask his father for his portion?

*In what ways are the young people of today like the younger son?
*Think of a time in your life when your child asked you for something like the younger son. How did you respond?

The father had a choice whether to give the younger son the property. Why do you suppose the father gave the property to the younger son?
Do you think the father should have given the son the property?
What would you have done?

When He Came into His Famine (Verses 13-16)
13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. **14** When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. **16** He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

Discussion Questions

*All throughout the text, God displays prevenient grace. God's prevenient grace is the grace that goes before us that keeps us from moving farther away from God. Give examples from the text that displays God's prevenient grace.

*Luke 15 is often termed, The Lost Chapter. What or who was lost in this parable of the Prodigal Son?
*The parable in Luke 15:11-32 is often called, The Prodigal Son? What does the word, *prodigal*, mean?

*What behaviors did the younger son display that were sinful or acts of offense against God?

When He Came to Himself (Verses 17-19)

17 *But when he came to himself*, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."'

Discussion Questions

*Verses 17-18 reads, **17** *But when he came to himself*, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; . . ." What does the phrase, "But when he came to himself," mean to you?

In what ways have you been like the prodigal son?

*Think of a time "when you came to yourself." What was your response?

When He Came into Forgiveness (Verses 20-24)

20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. **21** Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son. **22** But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** And get the fatted calf and kill it and let us eat and celebrate; **24** for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Discussion Questions

*Justifying grace is that grace, through which God pardons the believer of sin. Justifying grace cancels our guilt and empowers us to resist the power of sin and to fully love God and neighbor. Is there any evidence in this parable of justifying grace?

*Sanctifying grace or holiness works to transform people to live in community with God and God's people. Are there any examples of sanctifying grace displayed in this parable?

*What is the significance of the ring, robe, sandals, and fatted calf? It is God's will that all would receive salvation. What is salvation? How did the younger son receive salvation?

*Jesus told the parable of The Prodigal Son to teach His disciples a lesson. **Who** does the father represent? **What** does the father represent? What is the universal message (theme) of the parable?

*As a result of today's lesson, what can you say today to encourage the members of the class?

Lesson One – "When He Came to Himself"
Graphic Organizer - Research Chart

Type of Grace	Examples from the Text
Prevenient Grace	
Justifying Grace	
Sanctifying Grace	

APPENDIX I

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Demographic Survey

1. **Age Range**
   1-20 years old
   21-35 years old
   36-50 years old
   50-65 years old
   66+ years old

2. **Gender**
   Male
   Female
   Prefer not to disclose.

3. **Income Bracket (Gross)**
   $1-$20,000
   $20,001- $40,000
   $40,001- $70,000
   $70,001-$100,000
   $100,001+

4. **Your highest educational obtainment**
   High School diploma/GED
   Associate degree
   Bachelor's degree
   Master's degree
   Additional Master's degree
   Doctorate degree

5. **Where do you live?**
   Virginia
   Maryland
   District of Columbia

6. What is the total number of years you have been a member at Russell Temple CME Church?
1-5 years
6-10 years
11-20 years
20+ years

7. Have you ever attended:

Seminary	Yes	No
Bible College	Yes	No
Biblical Institute or School	Yes	No

8. How often do you read your Bible per week?
0-2 times per week
3-4 times per week
5-7 times per week
7+ times per week

9. Do you prefer to read the Bible or devotional books such as the Daily Bread, Upper Room, etc.?
Bible
Devotional Books

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